

MISSION COMMAND IN THE JOINT TASK FORCE – PORT OPENING

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ABSTRACT

MISSION COMMAND IN THE JOINT TASK FORCE – PORT OPENING

by Major Philip Todd Turner, 105 pages.

The Joint Task Force- Port Opening is a GRF assigned non-standing JTF designed to rapidly deploy in support of GCC requirements to rapidly open a port of debarkation prior to the arrival of RFF units. Once activated, JTF-PO assigned units transition operational control from their respective assigned Army, Air Force, and Navy chains of commands directly to USTRANSCOM for the duration of employment. This paper examined the current command construct through the lense of Mission Command Philosophy and addresses the question: is JTF-PO's OPCON relationship with USTRANSCOM the appropriate task organization under the principles of Mission Command? This qualitative analysis used in-depth interviewing to gain a perspective of the perceived benefits and disadvantages of the current OPCON relationship with USTRANSCOM, as well as two proposed alternative OPCON relationships: GCC operational control and service component retention of operation control. This analysis included viewpoints from Army, Air Force, and Navy officers in grades O4-O6 with significant experience in JTF-PO operations.

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ACRONYMS

ADCON	Administrative Control
AMC	Air Mobility Command
AOR	Area of Responsibility
APOD	Aerial Port of Debarkation
CCDR	Combatant Commander
COCOM	Command Authority (Combatant Command Authority)
CRG	Contingency Response Group
DDOC	Deployment and Distribution Operations Cell
DoD	Department of Defense
DPO	Distribution Process Owner
EPU	Expeditionary Port Unit
FORSCOM	Army Forces Command
GCC	Geographic Combatant Commander
GRF	Global Response Force
ITV	In-Transit Visibility
JTF-PO	Joint Task Force-Port Opening
MACOM	Major Army Commands
METT-TC	Mission, Enemy, Terrain and Weather, Troops and Support, Time, and Civil Considerations
MSC	Military Sealift Command
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
OIF	Operation Iraqi Freedom
OPCON	Operational Control

POD	Port of Debarkation
RFF	Request for Forces
RPOE	Rapid Port Opening Element
SDDC	Surface Deployment and Distribution Command
SPOD	Sea Port of Debarkation
TACON	Tactical Control
TCCC	Commander USTRANSCOM
UCP	Unified Command Plan
USSOCOM	United States Special Operations Command
USTRANSCOM	United States Transportation Command

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Some people think design means how something looks. But of course, if you dig deeper, it's really how it works.¹

— Steve Jobs, “Entertain Your Brain”

Joint Task Force-Port Opening Introduction and Background

Following the initial phases of both Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), senior military leaders recognized significant issues with the theater deployment and distribution process.² The process was a disjointed “system of systems, with each working individually and in concert with the other to enable the projection and sustainment of forces necessary to achieve Geographic Combatant Commander (GCC) objectives.”³ But there was no single Department of Defense (DoD) organization that the GCC could turn to for personnel and materiel movements oversight and support. The warfighter had no single organization through which he could direct and

¹ Brainy Quote, “Entertain Your Brain,” accessed 13 November 2014, <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/s/stevejobs416926.html>.

² U.S. Transportation Command, *Joint Task Force-Port Opening, Concept of Operations*, Version 1.0 (Scott Air Force Base, IL: U.S. Transportation Command, Strategy, Policy, Programs and Logistics Directorate, 15 October 2014).

³ Michael W. Pratt, “Joint Task Force-Port Opening: Can This Emerging Capability Expedite Operational Objectives Throughout The Range of Military Operations” (Research Paper, Naval War College, 26 October 2009), accessed 9 December 2014, https://cgsc.blackboard.com/bbcswebdav/library/Library%20Content/Master%20Library/Caspian/SPOD/R_JTF-PO_Lt_Col_Pratt_Paper.pdf?target=blank.

enforce distribution and In-Transit Visibility (ITV) performance standards.⁴ The theater distribution process lacked an overall accountable organization to synchronize force and materiel movements, optimize strategic and operational distribution, while monitoring and directing theater distribution process improvements. The result was “low warfighter confidence in the distribution process.”⁵

In response to these lessons learned, the DoD conducted a comprehensive process review and, in 2003, the Secretary of Defense designated Commander, US Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM) as the Distribution Process Owner (DPO).⁶

Responsibilities of the newly appointed DPO included: “serving as the single entity to direct and supervise the execution of the distribution system from factory to foxhole; improve overall efficiency and interoperability of distribution related activities; and to coordinate and synchronize distribution operations.”⁷

The transition from inter-theater movement to intra-theater movement with a hand off at the Port of Debarkation (POD) between USTRANSCOM and the Geographic Combatant Commander (GCC) was identified as the critical Achilles’ heel of the overall distribution process, as per figure 1.

⁴ U.S. Transportation Command, *Concept of Operations*.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Department of Defense, Department of Defense Instruction 5158.06, *Distribution Process Owner (DPO)* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, 30 July 2007), accessed 10 December 2014, www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/515806p.pdf.

⁷ U.S. Transportation Command, *Concept of Operations*.

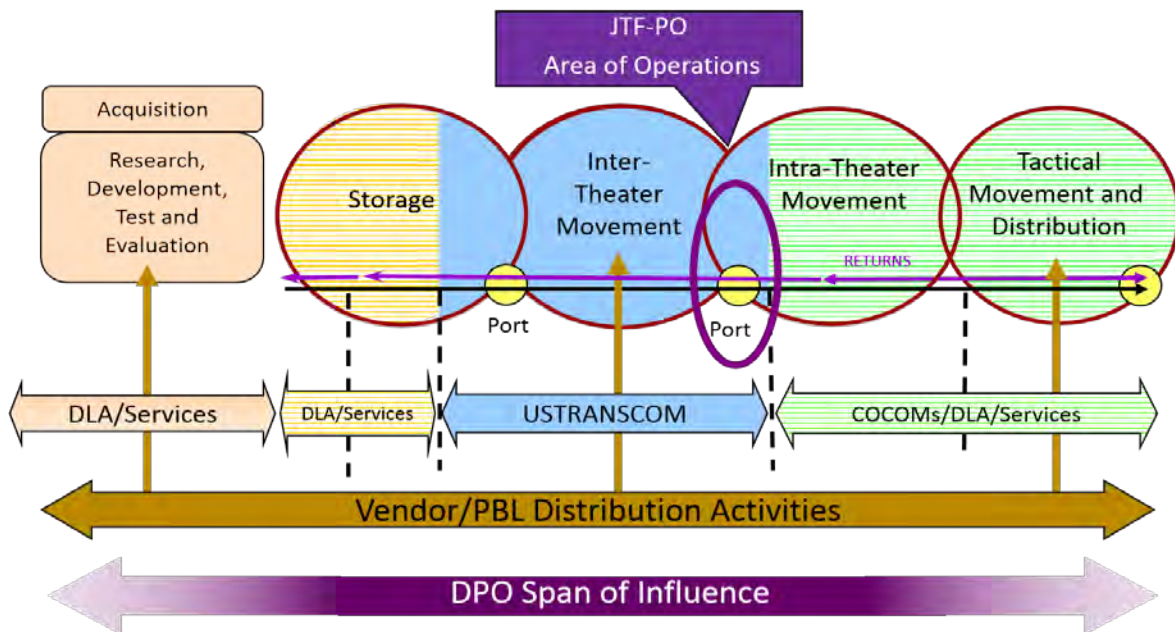


Figure 1. Gap in Distribution Process filled by Joint Task Force-Port Opening Photo

Source: U.S. Transportation Command, “Joint Task Force-Port Opening, Concept of Operations,” Version 1.0 (Powerpoint, U.S. Transportation Command, Strategy, Policy, Programs and Logistics Directorate, Scott Air Force Base, IL, 15 October 2014), Slide 3.

Senior leaders documented these shortfalls, gaps, and seams through various after action reviews (AARs) and studies. The identified distribution gaps and shortfalls included discrepancies between materiel shipped and received; minimal airfield/distribution assessment; ad hoc command and control; limited ability to rapidly clear cargo; limited capability to establish distribution node and network; limited movement control; limited capability to coordinate cargo onward movement; and

insufficient in-transit visibility (ITV).⁸ During Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) it took more than seven months, from October 2001 through April 2002, for visibility and accountability of intra-theater supplies to catch up with inter-theater shipments, with an embarrassing zero ITV during the first three months.⁹ This imbalance in the time-phased force and deployment data (TPFDD) process between the arrival in theater of maneuver units first and enablers second, hindered operational reach before operations essentially ever began. In summary, cargo arrived before the capability to track and distribute the cargo was in place, leading to “Pallet Mountains”¹⁰ at the PODs and significant warfighter frustration and confusion. “It was clear these glaring gaps in efficiency and the inherent risks they created needed to be addressed and corrected.”¹¹

As the newly designated DPO, USTRANSCOM developed initiatives to establish joint force capability for rapid port opening in support of the CCDRs.¹² The result of these efforts was USTRANSCOM’s creation of Joint Task Force-Port Opening (JTF-PO) Aerial Port of Debarkation (APOD) in 2006. Following discussion on a similar concept focused on seaport capability, the JTF-PO Seaport of Debarkation (SPOD) followed in 2008. This jointly trained force was designed to rapidly establish and initially operate an aerial or sea port of debarkation (POD), conduct cargo handling and movement

⁸ United States Joint Forces Command, Joint Doctrine Series, Pamphlet 9, *Operational Implications of the Joint Task Force-Port Opening (JTF-PO)* (Suffolk, VA: United States Joint Forces Command, 5 October 2007).

⁹ Pratt, “Joint Task Force-Port Opening.”

¹⁰ U.S. Transportation Command, *Concept of Operations*.

¹¹ Pratt, “Joint Task Force-Port Opening,” 3.

¹² United States Joint Forces Command, Pamphlet 9.

As part of the Global Response Force (GRF), the JTF-PO was designed to deploy quickly via verbal orders of the commanding officer (VOCO) from Commander USTRANSCOM (TCCC) rather than via the Request For Forces (RFF) process, thus avoiding the time intensive time-phased force and deployment data (TPFDD) process typically required for the deployment of conventional forces.

As a non-standing joint task force, the JTF-PO is comprised of a force pool of US Army, Air Force, and Navy elements geographically dispersed throughout the continental US. The elements of the JTF-PO are service retained until the JTF-PO is activated. This means that until the JTF-PO is called on to deploy, the Army units maintain their Army chain of command, the Air Force units maintain their Air Force chain of command, and the Navy units maintain their Navy chain of command. Not until the JTF-PO is activated do the units combine to create the JTF. It is at this point that the chain of command shifts from the individual assigned service component chains of command to the combined JTF-PO reporting OPCODE to USTRANSCOM.

The JTF-PO APOD is comprised of an Air Force Contingency Response Group (CRG) and Army Rapid Port Opening Element (RPOE). The JTF-PO SPOD may include the Army RPOE, Navy Expeditionary Port Unit (EPU), as well as elements of the regional port battalion headquarters or elements of Naval Cargo Handling Battalion-1 (NCHB) or elements of the Army 7th Transportation Brigade Expeditionary (TBX). The three Army RPOEs, all active component, fall under the Surface Deployment and Distribution Command (SDDC), as do all of the regional port battalions; the four active duty and one Air National Guard CRGs assigned to JTF-PO fall under Air Mobility

Command (AMC); and the four Navy EPU's assigned to JTF-PO, all of which are Navy reserve elements fall under Military Sealift Command (MSC).

The unique aspect of a non-standing joint task force is that elements of the JTF-PO do not reside on the same installations and do not share the same garrison reporting chain of command; furthermore, not all subordinate elements assigned to JTF-PO are activated when a JTF-PO is activated, as the essence of the JTF-PO is rapid deployability and scalable and tailorable teams based on the mission variables of METT-TC (mission, enemy, terrain and weather, troops and support available, time available, and civil considerations). Additionally, as a non-standing joint task force, there is no permanent JTF headquarters nor full time JTF commander. Upon activation of JTF-PO APOD the Air Force CRG element assumes the lead, with the CRG commander (O6 Colonel) assuming duties as the JTF-PO commander and his staff, with elements of the Army RPOE, performing duties of the JTF staff. Upon activation of the JTF-PO SPOD, the regional SDDC port battalion (or possibly terminal brigade) is typically assigned the lead, with the Battalion Commander (O5 Lieutenant Colonel) assuming duties as the JTF-PO commander and his staff, with elements of the Army RPOE, Navy EPU, and when required the Navy NCHB-1 plugging in to complete the staff.

Like most conventional US forces, the respective service commands, Surface Deployment and Distribution Command (SDDC) for Army, Air Mobility Command (AMC) for Air Force, and Military Sealift Command (MSC), have training and readiness authority (TRA) responsibilities over their individual JTF-PO elements based in their administrative and support responsibilities outlined in the Title 10 to the United States Code. These responsibilities, as dictated by Congress, include the legal obligations of

training, manning, and equipping their subordinate units. However, once JTF-PO activates USTRANSCOM assumes operational control of the JTF. See figure 3 for notional deployed JTF-PO command structure.

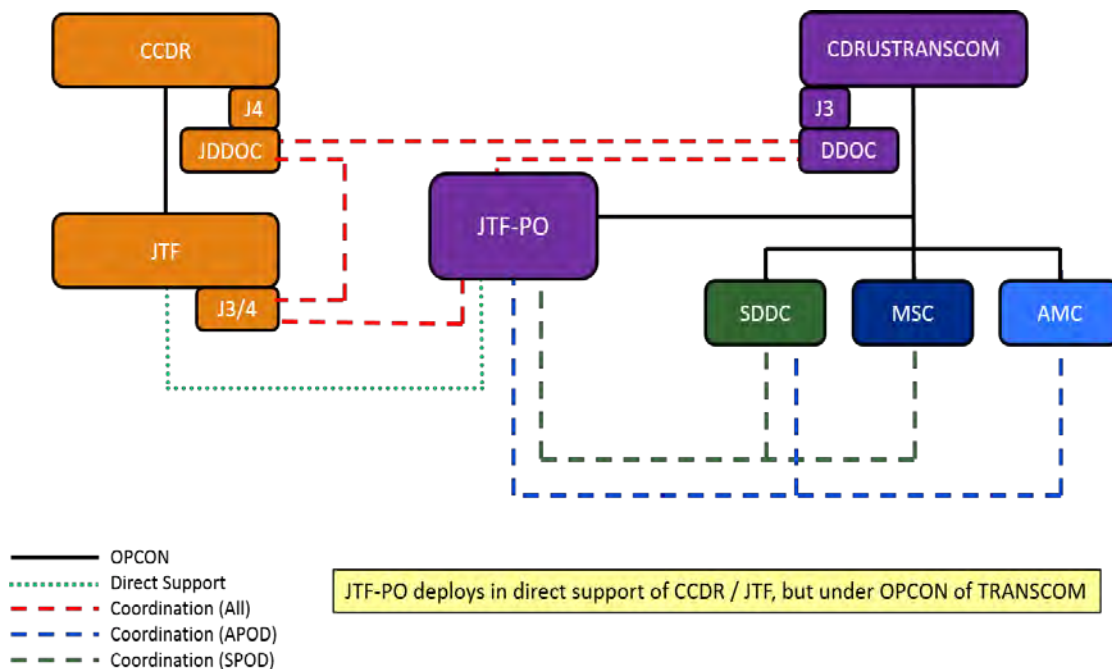


Figure 3. Notional Deployed JTF-PO Mission Command Structure

Source: U.S. Transportation Command, “Joint Task Force-Port Opening, Concept of Operations,” Version 1.0 (Powerpoint, U.S. Transportation Command, Strategy, Policy, Programs and Logistics Directorate, Scott Air Force Base, IL, 15 October 2014), Slide 8.

The JTF-PO maintains a direct support relationship to the supported Combatant Commander or supported JTF and is authorized to answer directly to the supported force's request for assistance.¹⁴ In the current construct, once the GCC requests JTF-PO

¹⁴ USTRANSCOM, Standing Execution Order 14-002 for FY14 Joint Task Force-Port Opening (JTF-PO) Requirements, TCJ3-TC Branch Chief, 22 January 2014.

support and JTF-PO is activated, Commander USTRANSCOM (TCCC) retains Operational Control (OPCON) of JTF-PO forces unless directed otherwise by the Secretary of Defense.¹⁵ The JTF-PO is expected to fulfill the requirements of the supported commander unless it requires approval from the OPCON authority.¹⁶ This means that when JTF-PO deploys forward to rapidly open and clear an austere A/SPOD in hurricane-ravaged Nicaragua or tsunami-devastated Philippines, in SOUTHCOM or PACOM, the JTF-PO takes all operational guidance from USTRANSCOM headquartered at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, rather than the GCC or local JTF commander on the ground. See figure 4 for detailed synopsis of joint command relationships.

¹⁵ USTRANSCOM, USTRANSCOM Instruction 10-27, Vol 2, *Joint Task Force-Port Opening*, 8 October 2013.

¹⁶ U.S. Transportation Command, *Concept of Operations*.

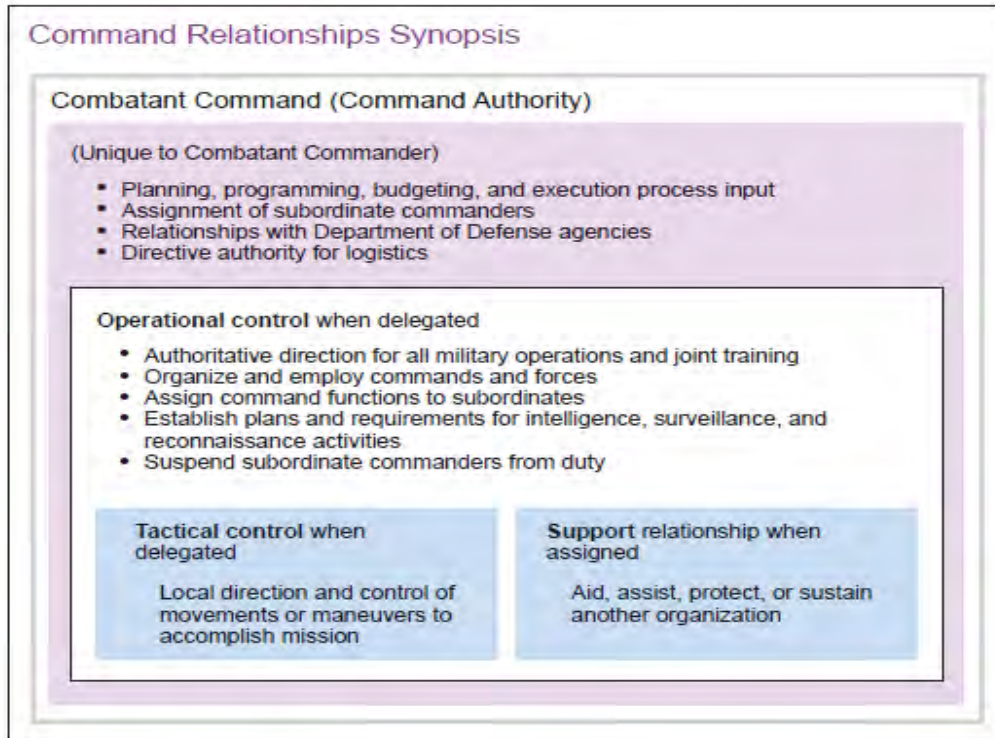


Figure 4. Joint Command Relationships Synopsis

Source: Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: CJCS, August 2011), III-3.

With the globe divided for DoD purposes into six Geographic Combatant Commands and three Functional Combatant Commands, confusing command relationships are reality. Transitioning operational control, especially during initial phases of complex operations such as a JTF-PO mission, compound the confusion. Powering decisions down to the lowest prudent level may assist in remedying a significant portion of the confusion.

Mission Command Introduction and Background

Though the term mission command is recent to US military doctrine, the principles of trust and decentralized execution based in mission-type orders, the basic guiding principles of mission command have been followed by successful military leaders since the eighteenth century.¹⁷ The 18th Century idea originated with Frederick the Great, “who complained after more than one battle that his highly experienced regimental commanders would not dare take action on their own but too often ask back for orders and thus waste precious time.”¹⁸ One hundred years later, in the early 1800s, following Prussian defeats by Napoleon at Jena and Auerstedt, Von Moltke the Elder, a disciple of Clausewitz, and the eventual Father of *Auftragstaktik* advocated for “Mission Type Orders”).¹⁹ While serving as the Prussian Chief of Staff, Von Moltke eventually saw put into doctrine his concept of *Auftragstaktik*.²⁰

General Martin E. Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) published the Mission Command White Paper on 03 April 2012, launching Mission Command to the forefront of Army leadership doctrine. Dempsey, the former TRADOC Commander and the 37th Chief of Staff of the Army, established three basic principles of

¹⁷ COL(R) James D. Sharpe and Lt.Col (R) Thomas E. Creviston, “Understanding Mission Command,” *Army Sustainment Magazine* 45, no. 4 (July-September 2013): 1, accessed 21 November 2014, <http://www.army.mil/article/106872>.

¹⁸ Jorg Muth, “An Elusive Command Philosophy and a Different Command Culture,” *Foreign Policy*, 9 September 2011, accessed 26 November 2014, http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/09/09/an-elusive-command-philosophy-and-a-different-command-culture/?wp_login_redirect=0.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

mission command to be implemented at the joint level: commander's intent, mission type orders, and decentralized execution.²¹ Dempsey's White Paper did not place a priority on one principle over the others, but stated that all three must be weighed and applied equally in order for successful mission command. Although not specifically listed as a principle, Dempsey stated that "our leader development efforts must create the climate for greater trust" and expounds on this thought in stating that "operations will move at the speed of trust."²²

"A potential complication with establishing trust in the application of mission command is leader-subordinate distance."²³ Due to the hierarchical structure of the military and the distributed nature of military units in garrison and forward deployed on the battlefield, commanders and subordinates can be both organizationally and physically separated.²⁴ Research has found a positive correlation between trust and leadership-subordinate close proximity; furthermore, research has also shown that the same level of trust was not inherent between leaders and subordinates not in close proximity.²⁵

This conundrum of the direct correlation between physical proximity separating leader and subordinate combined with the command construct between the two,

²¹ Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Mission Command White Paper* (Washington, DC: CJCS, April 2012).

²² Ibid.

²³ Sharpe and Creviston, 2.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

translated as the direct link between tactical, operational, and strategic goals manifested in the JTF-PO is the nexus of this study.

Addressing the current command construct of the JTF-PO, specifically the OPCON relationship to USTRANSCOM during activated deployment, a possible “major flaw in the JTF-PO concept,”²⁶ is the subject of this thesis. Throughout this document the following research questions will be addressed at length.

Primary Research Question: Is JTF-PO’s OPCON relationship with USTRANSCOM the appropriate task organization under the principles of Mission Command?

Secondary Question 1: What are the implications and potential alternatives of placing the JTF-PO under OPCON of the GCC or supported JTF?

Secondary Question 2: What are the implications and potential alternatives of maintaining service component operational control (SDDC for SPOD, AMC for APOD)?

Limitations and Delimitations

This thesis will focus on the practice of mission command as a leadership philosophy. This study will not focus on mission command as a warfighting function nor address the 16 doctrinal tasks for commands and staffs associated with the mission command warfighting function. Additionally, this thesis will not address mission command as an enabling system, defined in both the Army Mission Command Strategy

²⁶ COL Matthew D. Redding, Joint Exercise African Lion ‘13 AAR Comments, 19 April 2013, Word document provided via email to author.

(AMCS)²⁷ and ADP 6-0 as “the arrangement of personnel, networks, information systems, processes, procedures, facilities, and equipment that enable commanders to conduct operations.”²⁸ For purposes of this thesis, the mission command warfighting function and mission command enabling system are treated as sub-articles to the overall mission command philosophy which, in relation to JTF-PO, is the overarching theme and focus of this study.

Summary

This chapter provided an introduction and background on the topic and briefly addressed concerns with the current OPCON relationship of the JTF-PO viewed through the lense of the six principles of mission command. The next chapter will review literature relevant to this subject and attempt to provide an assessment of the significance of the material in relation to this study. The literature review will be followed by the employed methodology and subsequent chapters which will examine the topic in further detail while seeking to gain greater understanding of the command structure in order to answer the research questions presented in this introduction chapter.

²⁷ Department of the Army, *US Army Mission Command Strategy FY13-19* (Washington DC: Department of the Army, 12 June 2013).

²⁸ Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-0, *Mission Command* (Washington DC: Department of the Army, March 2014).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The only thing harder than getting a new idea into the military mind is getting an old one out.²⁹

— B.H. Liddell Hart

This chapter reviews available literature pertinent to the topic of mission command in the Joint Task Force–Port Opening. There has been little written on the JTF-PO and even less written on the reporting chain or mission command relationship between the JTF-PO and USTRANSCOM, the service component commands, or the supported GCC/JTF. Provided that both the full realization of JTF-PO and the integration of Mission Command philosophy into Army doctrine (and Joint doctrine to a lesser degree) occurred at approximately the same time within the last few years, the volume and availability of literature material for this study was limited; however, given the difference between the current mission command construct and the command construct proposed during concept development and the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System (JCIDS) process, one might expect more research has been conducted on the topic. Furthermore, given the strategic nature of the JTF-PO as USTRANSCOM’s rapid stopgap capability on standby for all GCCs, one might expect this atypical command relationship to have been analyzed, if not viewed skeptically on numerous occasions since inception.

²⁹ John M. Collins, *Military Strategy: Principles, Practices, and Historical Perspectives* (Potomac Books, 2002), 25.

Since USTRANSCOM's answer to the distribution process POD "gap" in 2006, JTF-PO has deployed as a full joint task force on two occasions: in support of Operation Unified Response in Haiti in 2010 and Operation United Assistance in West Africa in late 2014. There have also been numerous activations of the JTF-PO Joint Assessment Team (JAT), the small ultra-expeditionary "torch" port assessment party, as well as CRG-only deployments, but as of publication of this paper there had been only two full JTF-PO deployments.

During both Operation Unified Response and Operation United Assistance, the JTF-PO remained OPCON to USTRANSCOM. Additionally, JTF-PO maintains their USTRANSCOM OPCON status during annual and biannual verification and training events. However, while in garrison, the JTF-PO components report to their respective service higher headquarters, Air Mobility Command (AMC) for Air Force elements, Surface Deployment and Distribution Command (SDDC) for Army elements, and Military Sealift Command (MSC) for Navy elements. These component commands own the Title 10 legal responsibilities of training, manning, and equipping their assigned subordinate units and maintain operational control when the JTF-PO is not activated. AMC, SDDC, and MSC retain ADCON (administrative control) of their subordinate JTF-PO component units even when activated and under OPCON to USTRANSCOM. Thus, once activated the JTF-PO must coordinate with TCCC under an OPCON relationship, the CCDR/JTF in a supporting relationship, and their respective service component staffs under an ADCON relationship. Often confusing to subordinate commanders on the ground, complex command structures can lead to authority issues, gaps in support and awareness, redundant reporting procedures, and at times life and

death situations. As recently as Libya's Operation Odyssey Dawn in early 2011, USAFRICOM, USEUCOM, USSTRATCOM, as well as USTRANSCOM experienced challenges in "defining command relationships among combatant commands, leveraging subordinate commands, and interpreting strategic guidance" during humanitarian aid and noncombatant evacuation operations.³⁰

The JTF mission command literature exists for similar organizations, but the peculiar nature of JTF-PO's strategic mission and implications of that mission at the tactical level certainly justifies further review. Unfortunately, JTF-PO information is incredibly limited in actual doctrine, joint or component, with little more than the passing reference or general, simplified capability narrative. Little unclassified public information exists; at least no unclassified, public information is readily available.

Not since the early stages of capability development, when various publications referenced the METT-TC dependent nature of the JTF-PO and higher command relationship, with the JTF-PO under the OPCON of the GCC, has any obvious literature been compiled analyzing the rigidity of this relationship.³¹

Literature used for this study was subdivided into four distinct groups for organization and ease of use. A summary of each group of literature is provided and pieces important and influential to the research are noted accordingly. The four distinct

³⁰ Elaine M. Grossman, "Army Analyst Blames Afghan Battle Failings on Bad Command Set-Up," *Inside the Pentagon*, 29 July 2004, accessed 28 September 2014, https://cgsc.blackboard.com/bbcswebdav/pid-205416-dt-content-rid-1097193_1/institution/CGSC/AY14-15/RES_CORE/C300/C301/C301RE-CPY.pdf.

³¹ Robert T. Dail and David E. Jones, "Deployment and Distribution Command and Control," *Army Logistician* 39 (January-March 2007): 5-7, accessed 10 December 2014, <http://proquest.umi.com/>; United States Joint Forces Command, Pamphlet 9.

groups of literature include (1) Army Mission Command Doctrine, (2) Academic Articles and Case Studies on Mission Command, (3) JTF-PO in Doctrine, and (4) JTF-PO Newsletters and Articles. Unfortunately, none of these four categories have delved into a detail-oriented discussion on the positives and negatives of the unique command relationship currently existing between JTF-PO and USTRANSCOM.

Mission Command Doctrine

Army doctrine, specifically ADRP and ADP 6-0, provide the preponderance of the first group of literature analyzed for this study: Mission Command Doctrine. Unfortunately, there is no mention of JTF-PO or any other non-standing JTF in this group of literature.

Approximately one month after the publication of Dempsey's Mission Command White Paper, in May 2012 the Army released Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) and Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-0 Mission Command. The basic principles of mission command were expanded to six, and mission command was defined in terms of mission command philosophy, guided by the six principles of mission command, and the mission command warfighting function. ADRP 6-0's definition of the mission command philosophy, "exercise of authority and direction by the commander using mission orders to enable disciplined initiative within the commander's intent to empower agile and adaptive leaders in the conduct of unified land operation."³² The philosophy is guided by the six principles as depicted in figure 5, is guided by the six principles of mission command: (1) build cohesive teams through mutual trust; (2) create

³² Department of the Army, ADP 6-0, *Mission Command*.

shared understanding; (3) provide a clear commander's intent; (4) exercise discipline initiative; (5) use mission orders; and (6) accept prudent risk.

Doctrine states, "the principles of mission command assist commanders and staff in balancing the art of command with the science of control."³³ Unfortunately however, like the CJCS Mission Command White Paper, ADP 6-0 does not identify a most important principle of the six; however, the ADP specifically refers to trust as a requirement for successful implementation of mission command.³⁴



Figure 5. Mission Command Philosophy as defined in ADRP 6-0

Source: Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-0, *Mission Command* (Washington DC: Department of the Army, September 2012).

³³ Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-0, *Mission Command* (Washington DC: Department of the Army, September 2012), 1-3.

³⁴ Ibid.

Per ADP 6-0, to ensure effective mission command, the commander must understand the problem, visualize and describe the action, direct and lead the staff to prepare and execute, and assess the process.³⁵ This requires commanders to develop their teams and to develop joint, interagency and multinational partners.³⁶ Developing teams requires influence and delegation of authority, both of which require commitment from the team but also suggest a habitual relationship exists between the commander and subordinates.

According to doctrine, commanders will find it difficult to engage mutual trust, disciplined initiative, shared understanding, and prudent risk with subordinates with whom there is no relationship, as there is no knowledge basis from which to start. A new relationship between commander and subordinate where there is no pre-existing relationship suggests a C2 dynamic based on compliance rather than a relationship based on commitment, vital to mutual trust and understanding, and imperative to effective Mission Command. This shared understanding of the meaning, application, importance and limitations of Mission Command are consistent across all Mission Command doctrine analyzed for use in this thesis, to include brief mention of Mission Command in relation to joint operations in Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Operations*.

Mission Command Academic Articles and Case Studies

The second group of literature analyzed for this study included professional journal entries, General Officer academic papers, and case studies. These pieces

³⁵ Department of the Army, ADP 6-0, *Mission Command*.

³⁶ Ibid.

addressed the history of *Auftragstaktik*, the American adaptation of, examples of, and general opinions on the utility of mission command. Since Dempsey officially ushered mission command to the forefront of Army doctrine via his Mission Command White Paper in April 2012, there has been no lack of professional journal entries and academic papers on the topic.³⁷ Though the majority of these pieces offer insight into the credence, utility and complexity of true Mission Command, none of these articles or papers specifically address Mission Command in JTF-PO nor any JTF, non-standing or otherwise. More often than not, these pieces, as a whole, suggest that Mission Command absolutely requires that the commander and subordinate commander and-or units have a preexisting relationship, rather than be piecemealed ad hoc a la tailorable and scalable modular units. The recurring theme throughout most mission command academic articles is the idea of trust as the *primer inter pares* or first among equals in comparison to the other five principles of mission command. Additionally, the consensus is that trust requires regular commander-subordinate interaction and history in the form of habitual relationships.

However, there were two distinct exceptions to this theme of trust requiring habitual commander-subordinate interaction. The first of the two counterarguments was a series of five Mission Command articles written for *Army Sustainment Magazine* throughout 2014 and early 2015 by Dr. Paparone and George Topic. They identified two novel concepts that did not appear in previous academic articles on mission command: swift trust and Ori Brafman's "starfish and spider" concept. Paparone and Topic emphasized the utility of "swift trust" in the absence of preexisting relationships, which

³⁷ Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Mission Command White Paper*.

they described as being based in organizational reputation and vulnerability.³⁸ The second concept that strayed from most Mission Command academic articles was Paparone and Topic's favor of Ori Brafman's "starfish and the spider" comparison of "leadersless organizations" vice hierarchical organizations. The authors used this concept in their own comparisons of typical orders-based chains-of-command vice interrelated and interdependent logistics organizations which may be far more scalable and tailorable based on nonhierarchic task organization, the physical vastness of worldwide distribution, and mission set requirements.³⁹

The second of the two counterarguments to the theme of habitual relationships required for trust, was Colonel (Ret.) Sharpe and Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) Creviston's article Understanding Mission Command. Their article, similar in argument to Paparone and Topic's explanation of "swift trust," explores the counterargument that positive personal interactions between organizational leaders and distant subordinates help to develop a perceived closer relationship that contributes to the development of trust.⁴⁰ "When subordinates are physically separated from parent organizations, these individuals often look at the organization's leaders' past accomplishments, interactions, reputations,

³⁸ Dr. Christopher R. Paparone and George L. Topic, Jr., "Mission Command and Swift Trust," *Army Sustainment Magazine* 47, no. 1 (January-February 2015), accessed 7 January 2015, http://www.army.mil/article/140122/Mission_command_and_swift_trust/?from=RSS.

³⁹ Dr. Christopher R. Paparone and George L. Topic, Jr., "Mission Command: The Starfish and the Spider," *Army Sustainment Magazine* 46, no. 3 (May-June 2014), accessed 21 November 2014, <http://www.army.mil/article/124820>.

⁴⁰ Sharpe and Creviston, 2.

and the organizational goals to develop a level of trust.”⁴¹ The distributed nature of modern military operations leads to physical separation of commanders from subordinate units. This physical dispersement is conducive to decentralized execution; through the collaborative and distributive process, leaders are able to benefit from the input and strengths of subordinates and develop a shared understanding of the operational environment.⁴² With the development of the human dimension of trust, leaders can implement the principles of mission command, despite proximity between leader and subordinate units.⁴³

JTF-PO in Doctrine

The third group of literature included the very limited amount of JTF-PO doctrine and USTRANSCOM information products produced for use by the component commands (AMC, SDDC, and MSC), as well as the subordinate JTF-PO elements down to the unit level. These works include informational white papers; USTRANSCOM’s JTF-PO Standing Execution Order FY 14; USTRANSCOM’s Letters of Instruction 10-27 Vol I and Vol II guidance on program training, verification, and operations; concepts of the operation; mission essential task list (METL) and joint mission essential tasks (JMETs); monthly synchronization slides; annual JTF-PO leader seminar minutes; and exercise, verification, and deployment after action reviews.

⁴¹ Ibid., 2.

⁴² Ibid., 3.

⁴³ Ibid., 2.

The USTRANSCOM's Standing Execution Order (EXORD) 14-002 and both Instruction 10-27 Vol I and Vol II provide unclassified, standing mission type orders to potential JTF-PO commanders. The USTRANSCOM Letters of Instruction 10-27 Vol I and Vol II direct JTF-PO commanders to report to Commander USTRANSCOM (TCCC) through the USTRANSCOM DDOC, but the products are prescriptive in nature, reading like operations orders with little or no explanation or detail. Additionally the EXORD and both 10-27 Vol I and Vol II are useful as educational tools to assist the JTF-PO community, and DoD as a whole, to understand the capabilities and utilization of the global asset.

The recently published ATP 4-13 Expeditionary Intermodal Operations includes sections on port opening and the capabilities of the Army Rapid Port Opening Elements, but details are few. The OPCON command relationship is annotated in various USTRANSCOM task organization charts (as depicted in figure 3, in chapter 1) and the "OPCON to USTC"⁴⁴ relationship is mentioned only briefly in the recently published ATP 4-13 and Joint Publication 4-0,⁴⁵ as well as several other pieces of doctrine and throughout USTRANSCOM documents, but no detailed justification or explanation is provided, and no METT-TC dependent leniency to the construct is addressed. As a whole these products provide guidance on the employment of the JTF-PO, background information on the program, capabilities and requirements of the joint task force, and

⁴⁴ Department of the Army, Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 4-13, *Army Expeditionary Intermodal Operations* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, April 2014), 3-3.

⁴⁵ Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 4-0, *Joint Logistics* (Washington, DC: CJCS, October 2013).

general support provided to the GCC. The generic command relationship description notwithstanding, this group of literature provides little in terms of reasons behind the operational control of JTF-PO by USTRANSCOM nor any correlation in terms of the principles of mission command and the current operational construct.

Also included in this group of literature are the early pieces published during creation of the concept, to include US Joint Forces Command Pamphlet 9. These early pieces written during the adolescent stages of JTF-PO development describe a command construct directly under operational control of the GCC or with the option to transfer operational control to the GCC. During formulation and initial implementation of the JTF-PO concept via the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System (JCIDS), US Joint Forces Command Pamphlet 9 stated that JTF-PO would initially deploy under OPCON of USTRANSCOM but may transfer operational control to the supported GCC once sufficient forces were in place or when the POD was declared fully operational.⁴⁶ Furthermore, Pamphlet 9 went on to state that in some cases the JTF-PO would be OPCON to a subordinate JTF pending circumstances on the ground.⁴⁷ Additionally, in Robert T. Dail and David Jones' "Deployment and Distribution Command and Control," written in early 2007, the JTF-PO was described as being, "placed under the OPCON of a GCC."⁴⁸ These early pieces of literature depicted a JTF-PO command construct clearly in conflict with recent literature which depicts the current OPCON relationship with USTRANSCOM.

⁴⁶ United States Joint Forces Command, Pamphlet 9.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Dail and Jones.

This third group of literature is divided into two distinct halves, each defined by its respective description of operational control of JTF-PO contained therein. Early pieces describe an OPCON relationship to the GCC or supported JTF and more recent literature depicts and directs an OPCON relationship to USTRANSCOM. No specific piece of literature was clearly identified as the turning point of ending the concept of operational control by the GCC/JTF and shifting to operational control by USTRANSCOM.

JTF-PO Newsletters and Articles

The fourth group of literature analyzed for this study included JTF-PO journal entries, newsletters, and media releases. As a whole these pieces were positive public affairs products advocating the rapid port opening capabilities of the organization focused on specific joint exercises and verification events, as well as articles on the operational deployments in support of humanitarian aid and disaster relief (HADR) during Operation Unified Response in Haiti and, more recently, in support of Ebola operations during Operation United Assistance in West Africa. This group included numerous public affairs pieces promoting JTF-PO participation in exercises from Thailand, to Alaska, to Morocco, and a multitude of US-based air and sea ports in between. Additionally, this group provided historical context in terms of the birth and evolution of the JTF-PO concept as depicted through the lenses of the Army, Air Force, and Navy perspective; however, the occasional task organization chart notwithstanding, there was little detailed reference to or discussion of the mission command construct in these editorial pieces as a whole. Furthermore, there was no reference to or discussion of the implications of the OPCON relationship with regards to the principles of mission command in this group of literature.

Summary

Overall the review of these four distinct groups of literature provides three observatoins. First, this is a topic identified as requiring substantial further in-depth study as there is no holistic piece of scrutinizing literature addressing Mission Command in relation to the JTF-PO. Second, besides limited doctrine on the employment and capabilities of the JTF-PO, there has been little literature of substance at all produced on the topic since both the JTF-PO APOD and SPOD became fully operationally capable in 2008. Third, with the military's shift in focus from large scale combat operations to a resource constrained "win in a complex world"⁴⁹ centered around joint operations in uncertain environments and based in Mission Command, the relevance of the command relationship between JTF-PO and higher (vice supported commands) is vital to the success of future rapid response operations. Outside of special purpose forces, there is arguably no other rapidly deployable company-sized element commanded by a Lieutenant Colonel or Colonel, that has the potential for as much strategic impact on the front end of a major operation as the JTF-PO. This potential for strategic implication is the nexus to re-addressing the JTF-PO command structure.

⁴⁹ Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Pamphlet 525-3-1, *The US Army Operating Concept: Win In A Complex World* (Fort Eustis, VA: TRADOC, October 2014).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or the present are certain to miss the future.⁵⁰

— John F. Kennedy,
“Address in the Assembly Hall at the
Paulskirche in Frankfurt”

The purpose of this study was to identify if JTF-PO’s OPCON relationship with USTRANSCOM is the appropriate task organization under the principles of Mission Command and to identify and examine implications and potential alternatives of shifting OPCON to the GCC/JTF or maintaining service component operational control. This will be accomplished by the following method: one, determine the suitability of the current command construct in relation to the tenants of mission command philosophy; two, attempt to determine if a more appropriate command structure is better suited to the organization as a whole; and three, compare the JTF-PO command hierarchy to other JTF and modular sustainment unit command relationships.

This study will employ in-depth interviewing as the primary analysis methodology. In-depth interviewing, a qualitative research method often referred to as semi-structured interviewing, is the process of obtaining information from subject matter experts on a specific topic via semi-structured interview.⁵¹ Using this method, the

⁵⁰ The American Presidency Project, “Address in the Assembly Hall at the Paulskirche in Frankfurt,” 25 June 1963, accessed 13 November 2014, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=9303>.

⁵¹ Lisa M. Given, ed., *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, Vol. 1 (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2008).

researcher postures himself to gain as much information from the interviewee as possible about the topic in question. At the conclusion of the interviews, the researcher then distills the data for meaning, moving up the spectrum from data to information to knowledge and insight about the topic prior to offering recommendations.

In-depth Interviewing

During in-depth or semi-structured interviews, the conversation between interviewer and interviewee “oscillates among the researcher’s introduction of the topic under investigation, the participant’s account of his or her experiences, and the researcher’s probing of these experiences for further information useful to the analysis.”⁵² In-depth interviews are useful when the researcher seeks detailed information about the interviewee’s thoughts on the subject being studied.

Though in-depth interviewing has rapidly become one of the most common methods of qualitative research data collection, the method is not without limitations.⁵³ Information obtained from the interviewee is “limited by the recall of the participant, the ability of the participant to articulate his or her experiences within the timeframe of the interview, and the ability of the researcher to ask the “right” questions to prompt more detailed discussion and aid the analysis.”⁵⁴ This simply means that information gathered using in-depth interviewing is subject to the interviewee’s memory (which may be biased based on past experience, framed by perspective, or limited due to time elapsed since

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

their specific experience) and the interviewer's questions (which may also be biased, framed by perspective, or too narrow or too broad in scope). These variables emphasize not only the importance of trained interviewers, but also the importance of combining in-depth interviews with other forms of qualitative research data collection, such as firsthand observations, as well as doctrine, article, and after action report research to ensure a holistic research approach.

Conducting in-depth interviews follows the same general process followed by other qualitative research in that the endstate is information. In order to conduct in-depth interviews, the researcher must:

1. plan (the study identified involved stakeholders based on prior experience in the JTF-PO community);
2. develop interview instruments (see Appendix A for subject interview questions);
3. train data collectors (the author was trained in accordance with Institutional Review Board requirements);
4. collect the data (data maintained in accordance with Institutional Review Board requirements);
5. analyze the data (chapter 4); and
6. disseminate the findings (chapter 5).⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Caroline Boyce and Palena Neale, *Conducting In-Depth Interviews: A Guide for Designing and Conducting In-Depth Interviews for Evaluation Input* (Watertown, MA: Pathfinder International, 2006).

Snowball Sampling

In order to identify potential interviewees, this study utilized the snowball sampling method. Snowball sampling is a nonprobability sampling of interviewees selected in a non-random, purposive manner using a small population of initial participants who nominate other eligible participants.⁵⁶ Using snowball sampling, the researcher contacts potential participants and requests the opportunity to interview them on the research topic. At the conclusion of the interview, the interviewer asks the interviewee for recommendations of further potential subject matter expert interviewees. The initial population for this study includes subject matter experts identified through the author's professional experience working in the JTF-PO realm, who, once interviewed, in turn suggested subsequent experts in possession of information likely useful to this study. Due to the fact that snowball sampling is a non-random selection process, a sampling error cannot be calculated for this study.⁵⁷

Interview Process

Information for this study was obtained via open ended questions submitted to the identified subject matter experts by the interviewer. Data collected was analyzed using grounded theory, a research method which enables the researcher to “develop a theory which offers an explanation about the main concern of the population sampled and how

⁵⁶ Lisa M. Given, ed., *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, Vol. 2 (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2008).

⁵⁷ StatPac, “Sampling Methods,” 2009, accessed 11 January 2015, <http://www.statpac.com/surveys/sampling.htm>.

that concern is resolved or processed.”⁵⁸ All interviewees were specifically informed via verbal brief and consent form that interviews were strictly voluntary and that interviewees could end interviews at any time. Additionally, prior to initiating or recording any interviews, the researcher received written informed consent from all participants in the form of a signed consent form that was scanned and emailed to the researcher.

Interviews themselves were completed orally and recorded digitally. Recorder for Skype, reliable audio and video recording software for the Skype voice over internet protocol communications system, is the recording program used during this research study. Recorder for Skype allowed the interviewer to record and store the interviews for further review and analysis at a later date. To ensure complete transparency of this study, all recorded results were shared with the interviewees to ensure approval and concurrence of all oral statements acquired during the interviews prior to publication. In order to ensure confidentiality of all participants, confidentiality of records identifying subjects will be maintained for not less than three years; additionally, the researcher will maintain sole access to participant information on one controlled media platform, safeguarded by password and no information will be shared with outside sources.

The interviewed population included Army and Air Force colonels, lieutenant colonels and majors, as well as Navy captains. Most of the interviewees provided full disclosure for the use of their names and duty titles. Those interviewees that provided full disclosure did so in written form via the informed consent form as well as verbally during

⁵⁸ Grounded Theory Online, “What is Grounded Theory,” 2009, accessed 19 January 2015, <http://www.groundedtheoryonline.com/what-is-grounded-theory>.

the actual recorded oral interview. For those interviewees that did not provide full disclosure, those interviewees are assigned pseudonyms in the interest of privacy and referred to as “Army Colonel A” or “Navy Captain B” to ensure readers cannot reasonably determine the identity of participants.

The information derived from these semi-structured interviews contributes to the understanding of the current OPCON command construct between JTF-PO and USTRANSCOM in relation to the tenets of mission command philosophy. All interviews were initiated via structured questions which transitioned to semi-structured questions as determined by interviewee responses, experience, and recollection of specific events and concepts.

In order to determine the perspective of subject matter experts towards the current organizational command construct between JTF-PO and USTRANSCOM, the author conducted in-depth interviews with military officers with considerable experience in the JTF-PO community. These interviews were necessary to gain detailed understanding directly from a senior leader perspective on this niche command relationship. In order to glean a thorough understanding of the OPCON relationship between JTF-PO and USTRANSCOM, the interview questions listed in Annex A were provided to JTF-PO subject matter experts in the rank of O4 and above. These eight questions were specifically formatted for interview subjects well-versed in the intricacies of JTF-PO operations and unique reporting chain. The first four of the eight interview questions provide insight based in experience to better identify if JTF-PO’s OPCON relationship with USTRANSCOM is the appropriate task organization under the principles of Mission Command. The final four of the eight interview questions posture the study to better

identify and examine implications and potential alternatives of shifting OPCON to the GCC/JTF or maintaining service component operational control. Interview subject responses to all eight questions were then analyzed using the lense of the six principles of mission command: (1) build cohesive teams through mutual trust, (2) create a shared understanding, (3) provide a clear commander's intent, (4) exercise disciplined initiative, (5) use mission orders, and (6) accept prudent risk. Each of the six principles of mission command will be defined and addressed using all three possible JTF-PO command constructs previously addressed.

The responses for each interviewee were analyzed separately. Once similarities in answers to the interview questions were identified, they were compared side by side in order to identify themes in the current OPCON relationship with regards to the principles of mission command. The analysis of the data acquired from the interview process is presented in Chapter 4, "Analysis."

All information used in this research study was limited to unclassified, open source information obtained from the United States Army Combined Arms Research Library; US Government generated data, the World Wide Web, open source databases, in-depth interviews, and personal experience in the subject matter. This study recognizes the limitations to the study regarding validity and representation of the US military's perspective; however, to ensure both validity and transparency, all interviewed personnel were afforded the opportunity to read this study to ensure their contributions in the form of interview responses were accurate and representative of the interviewee's intentions.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

Words like *agility, initiative, intent, empowerment, mission orders and adaptability* all point to the condition of decentralization under a most important umbrella: trust. Without trust, mission command- as a routine practice and warfighting function, in garrison and in combat- has little hope.⁵⁹

— Colonel Thomas Guthrie, “Mission Command: Do We Have the Stomach for What it Required?”

The purpose of this research was to identify if JTF-PO’s operational control by USTRANSCOM is the appropriate task organization under the principles of Mission Command and to identify and examine implications and potential alternatives of shifting OPCON to the GCC/JTF or maintaining service component operational control. As mentioned in the introduction to this study, while in garrison the JTF-PO components report to their respective service higher headquarters, Air Mobility Command (AMC) for Air Force CRG elements, Surface Deployment and Distribution Command (SDDC) for Army RPOE elements and port battalion elements, and Military Sealift Command (MSC) for Navy EPU elements. The component commands own the administrative and support responsibilities outlined in Title 10 to the United States Code as dictated by Congress. These Title 10 responsibilities include training, manning, and equipping their assigned subordinate units. Furthermore, the component commands maintain operational control of their assigned subordinate units when the JTF-PO is not activated. AMC, SDDC, and MSC retain ADCON (administrative control) of their subordinate JTF-PO component

⁵⁹ COL Tom Guthrie, “Mission Command: Do We Have the Stomach for What it Required?” *Army Magazine* 62, no. 6 (June 2012): 1, accessed 26 November 2014, http://www.ausa.org/publications/armymagazine/archive/2012/06/Documents/FC_Guthrie_0612.pdf.

units even when activated and OPCON shifts to USTRANSCOM. Thus, once activated the JTF-PO must coordinate with Commander USTRANSCOM (TCCC) under an OPCON relationship, the CCCR/JTF in a supporting relationship, and their respective service component staffs in an ADCON relationship. This flexing, complex command structure, and the resulting authority and control issues, gaps in support and awareness, and redundant reporting procedures, are the subject of thorough analysis in this chapter.

Advocates for a reporting structure under the GCC or subordinate JTF suggest this relationship provides a more suitable mission command construct than reporting to a command headquartered at Scott Air Force Base, IL. The GCC/JTF is responsible for and knowledgeable of the AO, maintains habitual relationships with local or regional entities, and maintains shared interests in JTF-PO efforts. USTRANSCOM, as a functional CCMD, understandably is not likely to maintain the knowledge of the dynamics or complexities in that specific deployed AOR as the GCC. Force protection, security, intelligence, and sustainment are the responsibility of the GCC, plus priorities will be set by the GCC (likely through the JTF), not USTRANSCOM. The argument makes tactical sense on the surface. The OPCON relationship to USTRANSCOM requires AMC, SDDC, and MSC (as service components) to provide service level administration, personnel accountability reports, theater clearance, casualty and mortuary support, and logistics and maintenance support to the JTF-PO from afar.⁶⁰

Based on command authority relationships specified in both Army and Joint doctrine and the current organizational relationship between JTF-PO and USTRANSCOM, there are arguably three approaches for the mission command of an

⁶⁰ Redding, Joint Exercise African Lion '13 AAR Comments.

activated JTF-PO. The first construct is the current JTF-PO OPCON to USTRANSCOM relationship; the second is shifting OPCON of JTF-PO to the GCC/JTF; and the third is maintaining service component operational control (SDDC for the SPOD; AMC for the APOD). See table 1, Army Command Relationships for command and subordinate responsibilities associated with each relationship.

Table 1. Army Command Relationships

If relationship is:	Then inherent responsibilities:							
	Have command relationship with:	May be task-organized by: ¹	Unless modified, ADCON have responsibility through:	Are assigned position or AO by:	Provide liaison to:	Establish/maintain communications with:	Have priorities established by:	Can impose on gaining unit further command or support relationship of:
Organic	All organic forces organized with the HQ	Organic HQ	Army HQ specified in organizing document	Organic HQ	N/A	N/A	Organic HQ	Attached; OPCON; TACON; GS; GSR; R; DS
Assigned	Gaining unit	Gaining HQ	Gaining Army HQ	OPCON chain of command	As required by OPCON	As required by OPCON	ASCC or Service-assigned HQ	As required by OPCON HQ
Attached	Gaining unit	Gaining unit	Gaining Army HQ	Gaining unit	As required by gaining unit	Unit to which attached	Gaining unit	Attached; OPCON; TACON; GS; GSR; R; DS
OPCON	Gaining unit	Parent unit and gaining unit; gaining unit may pass OPCON to lower HQ ¹	Parent unit	Gaining unit	As required by gaining unit	As required by gaining unit and parent unit	Gaining unit	OPCON; TACON; GS; GSR; R; DS
TACON	Gaining unit	Parent unit	Parent unit	Gaining unit	As required by gaining unit	As required by gaining unit and parent unit	Gaining unit	TACON; GS; GSR; R; DS

Note: ¹ In NATO, the gaining unit may not task-organize a multinational force. (See TACON.)

ADCON	administrative control	HQ	headquarters
AO	area of operations	N/A	not applicable
ASCC	Army Service component command	NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
DS	direct support	OPCON	operational control
GS	general support	R	reinforcing
GSR	general support—reinforcing	TACON	tactical control

Source: Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 5-0, *The Operations Process* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, May 2012), 2-16.

The first of the command relationships, is the current construct, wherein JTF-PO subordinate units report to their respective service commands while in garrison, then once activated to form the JTF-PO, transition operational control to USTRANSCOM, with a support relationship to the GCC, and continued Title 10 responsibilities provided by the service components. See figure 6 for the most recent operationalization of the current OPCON relationship as used during 2014s Operation United Assistance in West Africa.

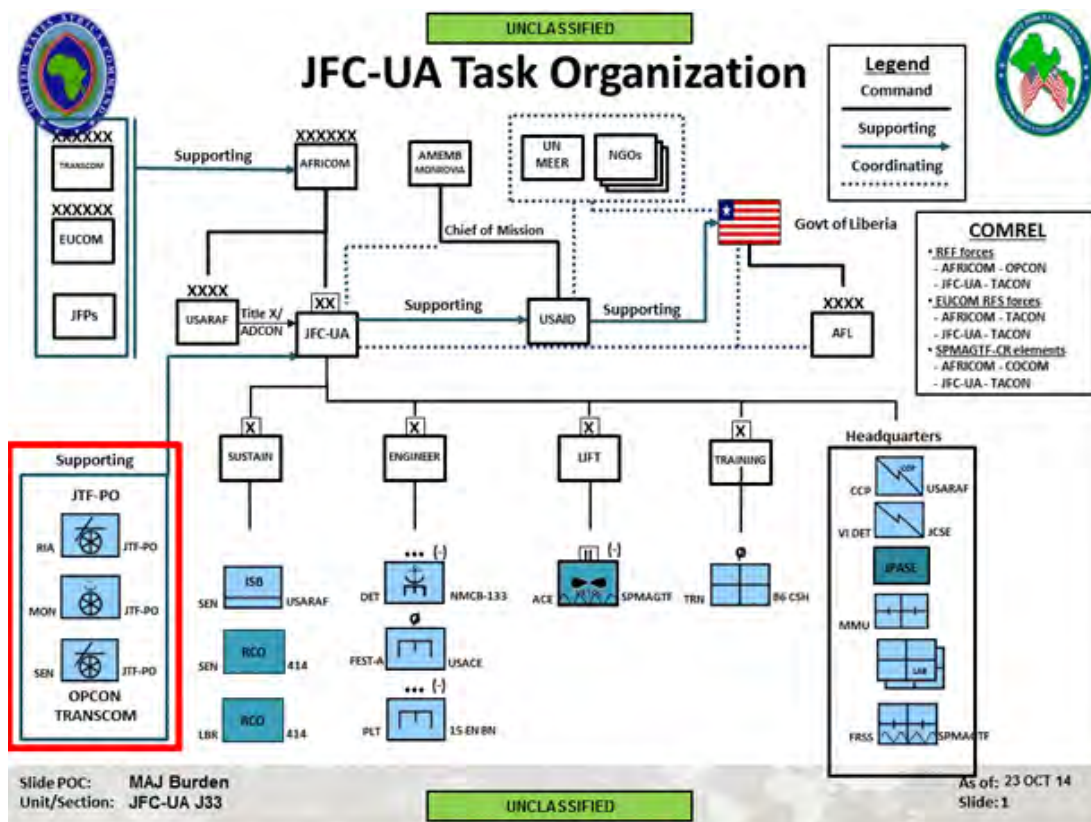


Figure 6. JFC-UA Task Organization, October 2014. JTF-PO depicted in lower left as OPCON to USTRANSCOM in a supporting role to JFC-UA

Source: Col Brad Johnson, JFC UA Task Org Chart, 23 October 2014. Received by author via email.

The second option is for JTF-PO subordinate units to report to their respective component commands while in garrison, then once activated to form the JTF-PO transition operational control to the GCC (vice to USTRANSCOM) via the supported JTF, with continued Title 10 responsibilities provided by the service components. This construct is in line with recent conventional sustainment unit deployments in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. As a rule, individual combat service support units which deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan reported to a new command once in theater, rather than maintain an OPCON relationship to the new gaining battalion or brigade in theater and continue an ADCON relationship with the battalion or brigade at home station.

The third and final option of command relationship is for the service component to maintain command and control of their subordinate units in garrison as well as during activated JTF-PO operations, with a support relationship to the GCC. This third option holds Surface Deployment and Distribution Command accountable for JTF-PO SPOD operations and Air Mobility Command for JTF-PO APOD operations. The curious and convenient aspect of this third option is that this mission (POE and POD operations) is already SDDC and AMC's assigned mission and core competency. Additionally, the service component construct is more suited to the principles of mission command due to the existence of habitual relationships. SDDC is currently the single port manager accountable for virtually every other surface node around the globe and AMC maintains a similar charge for the air nodes. The difference is that JTF-PO rapidly establishes a node (sea or air port of debarkation) not currently utilized as part of DoD's transportation

distribution network whereas SDDC and AMC's current nodes are already established and a part of the current transportation distribution network.

This suggests that due to JTF-PO's expeditionary capability and rapid establishment of a POD, that the service component should relinquish operational control to USTRANSCOM because the POD did not necessarily exist in the DoD distribution pipeline before the requirement for JTF-PO existed.

At this point the three identified command relationships (JTF-PO OPCON to USTRANSCOM; JTF-PO OPCON to the GCC/JTF, and service retention) are analyzed using the lense of the six principles of mission command: (1) build cohesive teams through mutual trust, (2) create a shared understanding, (3) provide a clear commander's intent, (4) exercise disciplined initiative, (5) use mission orders, and (6) accept prudent risk. Each of the six principles of mission command will be defined and addressed using all three possible JTF-PO command constructs previously addressed.

Incorporated into the analysis via principles of mission command are the perspectives and experienced-based opinions of the eight interviewees. The individuals interviewed ranged in grade from O4 Major to O6 Colonel and spanned Army, Air Force, and Navy branches. All personnel were interviewed due to their JTF-PO experience, whether during operational deployment in support of one of JTF-PO's two operational deployments or during one of the many USTRANSCOM sponsored JTF-PO verifications or exercises. See Appendix B for interviewee experience and JTF-PO background.

Of the interviewed officers, experience ranged from the recent commander of JTF-PO Liberia which deployed in late 2014 to support Operation United Assistance Ebola efforts in West Africa, to the JTF-PO J3 in Haiti in support of Operation Unified

Response in 2010. In addition to recent, relative JTF-PO operational deployment experience, cumulatively the interviewees participated in nearly forty USTRANSCOM sponsored JTF-PO exercises and events, to include five OCONUS (outside the continental US). OCONUS exercise experience included JTF-PO exercises and coordination efforts in El Salvador, Thailand, Philippines, Morocco and Alaska. The interviewees cumulatively participated in nearly thirty exercises within CONUS (continental US), with numerous APOD and SPOD exercises supporting the deployment or redeployment of forces through the ports of Norfolk, Charleston, Savannah, Jacksonville, Cape Canaveral and Beaumont. In addition to typical APOD and SPOD exercises, interviewees participated in atypical JTF-PO exercises, including support to Joint Logistics Over the Shore (JLOTS) at Fort Story; Joint Operations Access Exercises (JOAX) at Fort Bragg and Fort Polk; numerous Eagle Flag rotations at McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst; as well as Defense Support to Civil Authorities (DSCA) support at airports in both Illinois and Kentucky.

The cumulative JTF-PO experience of the Army and Air Force officers interviewed adds a depth of operational expertise and breadth of human dimension, allowing the topic be addressed holistically rather than merely through the use of Army doctrine.

Building Teams through Mutual Trust

The first principle of mission command identified in ADRP 6-0 is “building teams through mutual trust” where it is defined as a, “shared confidence among commanders,

subordinates, and partners.”⁶¹ Mutual trust requires the presence of trust in both the commander and the commanded; however, as Colonel Tom Guthrie asserts in his article “Mission Command: Do We Have the Stomach for What is Really Required?,” this entails much more than rank or task organization. “Trust must be earned, both by leaders and subordinates. It is developed over time through personal and professional interactions and dialogue over all issues from the simple ones to those of the most difficult nature. You do not earn trust simply by being the boss.”⁶²

Army Doctrine Reference Publication 6-0 echoes this sentiment: “developing trust takes time, and it must be earned. . . . Trust is gained or lost through everyday actions more than grand or occasional gestures.”⁶³ The units that combine to form the JTF-PO (the Army RPOE, the Air Force CRG and the Navy EPU) do not maintain regular, daily direct intercourse with USTRANSCOM. They report through their service component chains of command like typical conventional forces, and thus maintain a mutual trust with those entities rather than directly with a geographic or functional CCD. According to the above stipulations of trust, there can be no true mutual trust if there is no habitual relationship between JTF-PO commanders and USTRANSCOM with the rare exception of employment or deployment of the capability.

The counterargument to the assertion that the current construct violates the mission command principle of mutual trust is the concept and operationalization of swift trust. In their article “Mission Command and Swift Trust,” Dr. Paparone and George

⁶¹ Department of the Army, ADRP 6-0, 2-1.

⁶² Guthrie, “Mission Command,” 1.

⁶³ Department of the Army, ADRP 6-0, 2-1.

Topic define swift trust as, “the quick formation of socially reliable relationships that enable logistics networks to unify their efforts.”⁶⁴ Swift trust is based in two critical dimensions: institutional reputation and vulnerability, and that understanding these dimensions in a mission command context is vital to the development of logistics capabilities in the future.⁶⁵ Institutional reputation is described as exactly what it sounds like: customer faith in an organization based on past experience or informal grapevine network. The second dimension of swift trust, vulnerability, is described as “logistics network intelligence,” or a “web-like picture of threats” to the DoD distribution network.⁶⁶ Paparone and Topic’s assertion of the importance of swift trust in interconnected organizations and informal authorities is pertinent to the rapidly formed, non-standing nature of the JTF-PO: “Swift trust is central in designing and building disaggregated logistics capabilities that can aggregate as swiftly as the operators they support.”⁶⁷ Paparone and Topic recognize that building trust in typical organizations takes significant time, but that rapidly aggregated forces (like JTF-PO) simply do not have the luxury of time. Hence swift trust, based in the combination of institutional reputation and distribution network vulnerability, takes center stage as a habitual relationship between senior and subordinate may not exist and there may not be adequate time to build trust in the conventional manner.

⁶⁴ Paparone and Topic, “Mission Command and Swift Trust,” 2.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

The demarcation of conventional versus swift trust aside, trust is the dominant theme throughout mission command doctrine and academic literature. As mentioned in the introduction to this study, doctrine does not specifically enumerate the principles of mission command in order of precedence; however, the overwhelming theme throughout academic articles on the subject is that trust is the sole absolute requirement for successful implementation of mission command and that trust, swift or conventional, is the center of the bicycle wheel from which all other mission command principles originate and rely.

Of the personnel interviewed for this study, the first of two biggest themes across all participants was the issue of trust between JTF-PO personnel and USTRANSCOM personnel, but specifically DDOC personnel. All interviewees expressed concern regarding the abilities of the DDOC to provide quality support to the JTF-PO during exercise or operational deployment and the implications associated with that relationship. Per USTRANSCOM Instruction 10-27 Vol II, the JTF-PO reports “OPCON to TCCC and is supported by the TCJ3 through the DDOC.”⁶⁸ The frustration with the quality of support provided by the DDOC and the issue of trust are not new or clandestine issues. The recent JTF-PO Liberia after action review published in December 2014 made specific mention of the confusion and significant delay to redeployment caused by trust concerns:

Typical redeployment actions and validation occur through direct communication between JTF-PO and USTC/TCJ3 with specific approval from the supported command to verify that follow-on forces arrived and are operational. During this mission, USTC included the JFC and USAFRICOM in the movement validation

⁶⁸ USTRANSCOM, USTRANSCOM Instruction 10-27, Vol 2, *Joint Task Force-Port Opening*, 8 October 2013, 64.

process in addition to verifying follow-on force arrival and FOC status. This change added nearly four weeks to the assignment of airlift for the JTF-PO equipment chucks. It also highlights a perceived lack of confidence at USTC in the ability of the JTF-PO commander to properly manage the RIP/TOA of mission to follow-on forces, despite the bi-annual validation requirement that should have a baseline level of confidence.⁶⁹

Additionally, the JTF-PO Senegal after action review, also a product of JTF-PO support to Operation United Assistance, expressed concerns about the DDOC chief not updating info in a timely manner which led to confusion due to gaps in information sharing.⁷⁰

During telephonic interviews, Army COL A, a pseudonym assigned to an Army O6 well versed in both Global Response Force (GRF) operations, JTF-PO operations, and mission command philosophy, expressed frustration with the topic of trust, specifically with trust in the DDOC. When questioned about his experience, as a JTF-PO commander reporting through the DDOC, he responded, “the DDOC has had zero situational awareness . . . I scratch my head when I think about it.”⁷¹

Major Keith Pruett, former 690th RPOE commander and JTF-PO J3 for numerous exercises, expressed frustration with DDOC support during the highly stressful initial arrival and set-up of JTF-PO during an exercise in Thailand: “they were not tracking that the JTF-PO was even OCONUS training and required comm [unications] support. They

⁶⁹ Col Bradford Johnson, Commander, 571st Contingency Response Group, After Action Report, OUA (Operation United Assistance), JTF-PO Liberia, 18 December 2014, Word document provided to author via email.

⁷⁰ Col David Mounkes, Commander 123rd Contingency Response Group, After Action Report, OUA (Operation United Assistance), JTF-PO Senegal, 28 November 2014, Word document provided to author via email.

⁷¹ COL A, telephone interview by author, 31 March 2015.

didn't even seem interested. They were almost combative, having to deal with our requests.”⁷²

Former 688th RPOE commander and JTF-PO J3 during exercise African Lion '13 in Agadir, Morocco, Major Joe Borovicka expressed an almost identical concern but adjusted his expectations management following repetitive disappointments with a “less than warm response.”⁷³ As the J3 in charge of exercise reporting requirements, on one occasion Borovicka called the DDOC to provide them a warning order that his battle captain was calling them in the near future to request information; he provided the DDOC personnel the backstory on the African Lion exercise, the current scenario being exercised, and prepared them on how to properly answer when the captain called to request support. Borovicka received no training benefit from the situation, but felt compelled to provide the DDOC with answers to his own team's questions “to ensure positive reinforcement” of the battle captain, as he was embarrassed for his subordinates to witness the situationally inept responses of the DDOC.⁷⁴

The second command construct, OPCON to the GCC/JTF, does not address the mission command principle of “mutual trust” to any greater capacity than the current OPCON to USTRANSCOM construct. As with the current construct, the JTF-PO subordinate units do not maintain a habitual relationship with any GCC/JTF, which again defies ADRP 6-0's assertion that mutual trust takes time and is achieved through regular

⁷² Major Keith Pruett, telephone interview by author, 16 April 2015.

⁷³ Major Joseph Borovicka, telephone interview by author, 8 April 2015.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

daily contact. Paparone and Topic's concept of swift trust in logistics operations⁷⁵ may prove useful in the second command construct, but it would be no different than swift trust in the current command construct: swift trust may be awarded through institutional reputation and vulnerability. The fact remains that even with a shift in OPCON from USTRANSCOM to the GCC/JTF, the JTF-PO remains afflicted with the same set of circumstances that it currently suffers in regards to mutual trust according to the principles of mission command: there is no relationship from which to base trust.

This leads to the third command construct, service component retention, with operational control remaining with either SDDC for the SPOD mission or AMC for the APOD mission. Given that habitual relationships exist between the RPOEs and SDDC and the CRGs and AMC, based on a typical wire diagram task organization, the seeds of mutual trust are planted. The 'shared confidence' slice of the definition is out of scope of task organization analysis and must be put to the test by the commanders subject to those task organizations through those habitual relationships and regular, day to day interactions.

Create Shared Understanding

The second principle of mission command is "create shared understanding." ADRP 6-0 explains that commanders and staffs frame problems and visualize how to solve those problems; this process of framing and solving leads to a level of shared understanding. "Through collaboration and dialogue, participants share information and perspectives, question assumptions, and exchange ideas to help create and maintain

⁷⁵ Paparone and Topic, "Mission Command and Swift Trust," 2.

shared understanding, resolve potential misunderstandings, and assess the progress of operations.”⁷⁶ The second of the two overwhelming consensus complaints identified during interviews was the lack of understanding of JTF-PO capability and utility. The recurring lesson learned from ten out of ten interviewees was that a shared understanding of JTF-PO across the force is non-existent. At the macro level, GCCs and affiliated MACOMs do not possess substantial knowledge regarding the utilization of the JTF-PO, its capabilities, the request process, and all too often its very existence. At the micro level, the USTRANSCOM DDOC completely lacks an understanding of the JTF-PO mission set, as mentioned during the previous analysis of “building teams through mutual trust.”

Numerous JTF-PO level exercise and deployment after action reviews, spanning at least three years, and including both SPOD and APOD operations, depict a systemic lack of understanding and awareness regarding JTF-PO operations. During JTF-PO support to Joint Logistics Over The Shore (JLOTS) at Fort Story in 2013, the JTF-PO commander and joint operations center (JOC) staff were routinely required to halt operations to provide unscheduled JTF-PO capabilities briefs and facility tours to visitors, despite an actual operational requirement to clear the beach of equipment, stage and onward move the equipment, and interface with customer units.⁷⁷ The hole in the education of the force on JTF-PO operations is so significant that the USTRANSCOM JTF-PO capabilities brief is often referred to as the JTF-PO 101 brief. Additionally, J3T

⁷⁶ Department of the Army, ADRP 6-0, 2-2.

⁷⁷ MAJ Matthew Buch, After Action Review, AAR Slides JLOTS, 12 September 2012. Received by author via email.

(training) require all JTF-PO leaders to verbally receive the aforementioned JTF-PO 101 brief by a member of the J3T staff shortly upon arrival to JTF-PO aligned units. As one interviewee pointed out, “perhaps they should provide the 101 brief to DDOC personnel.”⁷⁸

Critics to the current OPCON relationship point out that the service components, SDDC and AMC, already maintain a working knowledge of the JTF-PO mission. That shared understanding between SDDC and AMC and their subordinates is based in the fact that SDDC’s core competency is surface ports and AMC’s core competency is aerial ports. Additionally, SDDC and AMC maintain an intimate understanding of the complexity of the JTF-PO mission, as they, as the service components, are charged with the Title 10 responsibilities of manning, training, and equipping their subordinate units. SDDC is intimately involved in RPOE readiness posture, while AMC is intimately involved in CRG readiness posture, as both commands are responsible for ensuring the forces they provide to JTF-PO are prepared to execute their assigned GRF mission at a high state of readiness.

Despite the expected “challenges resulting from exercising muscles that infrequently get exercised,”⁷⁹ Air Force Colonel Brad Johnson, Commander of 571st Contingency Response Group based at Travis Air Force Base, suggests that the JTF-PO OPCON relationship to USTRANSCOM makes more strategic sense than an OPCON relationship to the GCC/JTF or the retention by the service component. As the commander during JTF-PO’s most recent operational deployment, Johnson led JTF-PO

⁷⁸ Pruett, interview.

⁷⁹ Colonel Bradford Johnson, telephone interview by author, 14 April 2015.

Liberia in support of Joint Forces Command United Assistance in Monrovia, Liberia from September to early November 2014. Col Johnsons reference to infrequent exercise is based in JTF-PO's history. As mentioned in the introduction, the capability has been activated only twice for operational deployment, in Haiti in 2010 and the recent 2014 Ebola support mission in West Africa; this infrequent activation directly correlates to the level of "shared understanding." Col Johnson asserts that when activating the JTF-PO capability, which he describes as "responsive but not enduring,"⁸⁰ a well-oiled machine may not be the immediate result, but "you just dust off the JTF-PO battle book at USTRANSCOM" and "grind the gears through the initial confusion."⁸¹

Johnson compared USTRANSCOM's OPCON relationship of the JTF-PO as similar to USTRANSCOM's control of aircraft, in that both are "limited assets which are globally focused."⁸² USTRANSCOM can manage these assets both effectively and efficiently, "as they own no AOR" and were designed to "support all the GCCs."⁸³ The argument is that USTRANSCOM maintains an understanding of the JTF-PO concept and is effective in employment of that capability, despite any inadequate customer service provided by the rotating personnel assigned to the DDOC.

Major (Ret.) Armando Velazquez, former 690th RPOE commander, arrived on the first air chalk into Haiti during JTF-PO's support to Operation Unified Response in

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

2010. In his version of providing a shared understanding, Velazquez makes a similar comparison to Johnson's point:

The community must think of JTF-PO as an asset, like an aircraft. You could relinquish operational control but there must be a very good reason; C-17s don't just get handed over to the GCC. JTF-PO is a global asset, like an aircraft, that moves to the highest priority of need. These decisions aren't made in a vacuum; they're made with guidance and input from the JCS and GCCs. . . . I'm not opposed to the GCC taking operational control during extreme circumstances, but the current relationship allows USTRANSCOM to maneuver these units (JTF-PO) in support of all GCCs by priority. . . . This [current command relationship] is the best structure. Nothing prevents USTRANSCOM from relinquishing OPCON of JTF-PO to the GCC in extreme circumstances, but they're not just going to give up a C-17 and they are not going to just give up JTF-PO as it takes them out of the fight for the next GCC who may need the requirement and have an even higher priority.⁸⁴

Velazquez recognizes that "not all GCCs are created equal"⁸⁵ and that in some cases a shift of operational control may be the right answer, but it is based in a shared understanding of the mission and of JTF-PO capability. However, he maintains that USTRANSCOM operational control of JTF-PO is the appropriate starting point and that any deviation be made from the current construct. An adamant proponent for JTF-PO, Velazquez observes that, "the confusion in the relationship doesn't reside at USTRANSCOM or the JTF-PO subordinate units" but suggests a lack of understanding resides in the supported outside agencies who may not be clear on the JTF-PO mission.⁸⁶ He concludes his point of view, stating that despite the current relationship deviating

⁸⁴ Major (R) Armando Velazquez, telephone interview by author, 15 April 2015.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

from a cultural norm, “it [the current OPCON relationship] works, but you must know the capability and the rules associated with the capability.”⁸⁷

Johnson, the recent JTF-PO Liberia commander during the 2014 Ebola support mission, states that transitioning operational control of the JTF-PO from USTRANSCOM to the supported GCC/JTF is the “wrong answer.”⁸⁸ He cites the strategic nature of the JTF-PO mission, the responsiveness of the capability, and the limited assets of the JTF-PO as the arguments against transitioning operational control from USTRANSCOM to the GCC/JTF.⁸⁹ Col Johnson points out the dangers of shifting OPCON to the GCC/JTF lie in losing redeployment timeline control, effectively nullifying the strategic nature and responsiveness of the JTF-PO.

Captain Gunn, former commander of Navy EPU 107 with significant JTF-PO experience both CONUS and OCONUS, expressed concerns regarding overall force understanding of the concept. He provided an example resulting from an issue that occurred during exercise African Lion '13:

The USMC regimental commander wanted to discuss the issue with his JTF-PO O-6 counterpart, to understand the event and, in effect, hold someone accountable. The regimental commander was also assigned by USAFRICOM as the JFLCC, and was therefore surprised to find out that not only did the JTF-PO not have an O-6 in charge (after all, he probably reasoned, it is a JTF), and more surprised to find out that this O-5 command did not fold into his C2 construct. Without any ties to theater, who does the supported JTF talk to? He was told his counterpart was an O-6 BWC at Scott AFB.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Johnson, interview.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Gunn, interview.

Colonel Johnson and Captain Gunn clearly maintain an understanding of the capability and the rules governing the use of the capability, but most of the force does not. This is a testament to the vital importance of “creating shared understanding.” Providing operational control of JTF-PO to the GCC/JTF endangers JTF-PO of not fulfilling mission requirements and prevents the capability from supporting another GCC/JTF who may require the asset later.⁹¹ But GCCs and JTFs will not understand these nuances of JTF-PO without knowing the rules governing the use of JTF-PO (which lies in mutual understanding which is achieved through capability education of the force).

Without a shared understanding of JTF-PO across the force mission command will remain ineffective, resulting in inappropriate employment of the capability and continued issues with the command construct, no matter who retains operational control.

Provide a Clear Commander’s Intent

The third principle of mission command is “provide a clear commander’s intent.” Per ADRP 6-0, “the higher commander’s intent provides the basis for unity of effort throughout the larger force. Each commander’s intent nests within the higher commander’s intent.”⁹² In the case of an O5 or O6 commanded JTF reporting to a 4-star functional CCMD via the DDOC, while supporting a JTF in a GCC outside their chain of command, questions abound regarding unity of effort and nesting of commanders’ intents.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Department of the Army, ADRP 6-0, 2-3.

According to Army COL A, USTRANSCOM Instruction 10-27 is inconsistent with mission command, as it vests command-like authority with TCJ3 (USTRANSCOM J3) via the DDOC, thus circumventing the authority of commanders reporting directly to commanders by delegating command level decisions to staffs.⁹³ This circumventing of commander authority by staffs is a clear example of the inappropriateness of the OPCON relationship to USTRANSCOM as viewed through the principles of mission command. The command-like authority of the DDOC is a recurring point of contention throughout telephonic interviews with Army, Air Force and Navy leaders familiar with JTF-PO operations. The DDOC is USTRANSCOM's operations cell, the center of gravity for USTRANSCOM activity and generally the location of the action officer tasked with answering phones and providing direction to JTF-PO (and USTRANSCOM myriad other operations). As mentioned throughout chapter 4, reports of DDOC situational awareness during both JTF-PO operational deployments and validation exercises, general understanding of the JTF-PO mission, and an almost systematic tendency to shift responsibility to the J3T (USTRANSCOM training section and proponent for JTF-PO verification) is unsupportive; however, the DDOC's actions are not the concern for "provide a clear commander's intent." The concern is the atypical reporting of a subordinate commander to a staff rather than the actual senior commander. Army COL A expounds on his previous argument, stating that rather than synchronizing support efforts, the DDOC in reality ends up acting as a barrier or "fire wall" which impedes information flow in the staff.⁹⁴ Army COL A summarizes his point, stating that directing a

⁹³ COL A, interview.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

commander to report to a staff officer unfamiliar in JTF-PO operations and construct (as well as the commander's intent) is "not an effective way to conduct mission command."⁹⁵

It is clear that the current JTF-PO OPCON to USTRANSCOM construct violates the provide a clear commander's intent from this perspective, as the subordinate commander is essentially relegated to communicating with an operations cell with negligible knowledge of commander's intent with regards to the specific JTF-PO mission. However, USTRANSCOM clearly provides TCCC guidance in the form of their JTF-PO Standing Execution Order (EXORD). In the realm of commander's intent, there is no specified or identified delivery mechanism. In the case of JTF-PO, there is no requirement for commander's intent to be delivered through the DDOC or telephonically or via email from TCCC. The Standing EXORD, which is virtually doctrine in JTF-PO circles, is readily available and routinely addressed. USTRANSCOM has provided TCCC intent and end state in unambiguous terms to all subordinate commanders in paragraphs 3.A and 3.A.2. This document is tangible confirmation that the current OPCON relationship of JTF-PO to USTRANSCOM fulfills the clear commander's intent principle of mission command. The issue lies in the DDOC's awareness and understanding of TCCC intent provided in the Standing EXORD accompanied with the concern of a DDOC history of providing contradictory or uninformed guidance when contacted by JTF-PO during exercise or mission execution, which the preponderance of interviewed personnel expressed as a major concern.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Army Colonel A, telephone interview by author, 31 March 2015; Johnson, interview; Captain Eric Gunn, telephone interview, 24 April 2015; Borovicka, interview;

Despite these concerns, neither shifting operational control to the GCC/JTF nor enforcing service component retention of operational control is likely to result in superior documented commander intent by way of a published order. However, as Army COL A observed in his argument, the issue is not so much in generic, blanket commander's intent published in an operations order, but commander's intent in the form of key tasks and end state, provided through commander-to-commander interaction and interpersonal communication between leaders of organizations.

Gunn made a similar observation to Army COL A regarding commander's intent:

The OPCON relationship with USTC is odd in that the deployed unit reports directly to the DDOC. The operational commander equivalent is unclear. Typically, a JTF staff (JFMCC, etc.) is responsible for and responsive to the warfighter, and provides operational orders, direction, and guidance to the tactical-level unit commander. Who is the JTF commander in the case of the JTF-PO? It is either the DDOC BWC [battle watch captain], or the Commander (USTC actual). Neither is the appropriate commander for the JTF-PO. The USTC Commander, as a four-star and a Combatant Commander, is too senior and too engaged with his global perspective to play the part of OPCON to a deployed O-5-level unit. The DDOC BWC's primary responsibility is to provide situational awareness and decision space to the Commander. As a rotational watchstander, the BWC is also not a true commander of forces. While the BWC can maintain awareness of the JTF-PO mission and even provide direction and guidance (including operational commands on behalf of the Commander), he/she is never the Commander. In essence, the JTF-PO mission deploys without a true operational-level commander.⁹⁷

In this case the third command construct, the service component retaining operational control (SDDC for SPOD and AMC for APOD) may prove more appropriate in satisfying the third principle of mission command, "provide a clear commander's intent." With habitual relationships based in shared operational history between the

Lieutenant Colonel Isabel Geiger, telephone interview by author, 16 April 2015; Pruett, interview; Valazquez, interview.

⁹⁷ Gunn, interview.

RPOEs and SDDC and the CRGs and AMC, the opportunity for regular commander's intent exchanges is far more likely and the format far more likely to resemble the commander's intent (key tasks, end state) that military culture has grown accustomed to.

Exercise Disciplined Initiative

The fourth of the mission command principles is "exercise disciplined initiative."

ADRP 6-0 defines the principle unambiguously:

Disciplined initiative is action in the absence of orders, when existing orders no longer fit the situation, or when unforeseen opportunities or threats arise. Commanders rely on subordinates to act. A subordinate's disciplined initiative may be the starting point for seizing the tactical initiative. This willingness to act helps develop and maintain operational initiative used by forces to set or dictate the terms of action throughout an operation.⁹⁸

Army Doctrine Reference Publication 6-0 places this principle in context by pairing it with the previously addressed principle of "commander's intent:" "the commander's intent defines the limits within which subordinates may exercise initiative . . . to apply their judgment in ambiguous situations because they know the mission's purpose, key tasks, and desired end state."⁹⁹ Though the current construct forces subordinate JTF-PO commanders and staff to exercise disciplined initiative, critics observe that the same cannot be said of the USTRANSCOM DDOC. A pattern is formed: four out of four principles of mission command identify the DDOC as a significant concern. The appearance of lack of disciplined initiative suggests a laissez-faire attitude on the part of DDOC personnel. A counterargument of JTF-PO operations comprising only a minimal percentage of DDOC monitored USTRANSCOM activities is moot.

⁹⁸ Department of the Army, ADRP 6-0, 2-4.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

Without disciplined initiative on the part of past JTF-PO commanders and staffs overcoming shortfalls in DDOC support cited by numerous subjects already mentioned, numerous exercises and one of the operational deployments would not have executed as successfully as they did. As Colonel (Ret.) Fontenot and Colonel (Ret.) Benson explain in their article “The Conundrum of Mission Command,” “the exercise of disciplined initiative is built upon trust. Trust is built upon knowing strengths and weaknesses of subordinate staffs and commanders.”¹⁰⁰ When the higher command maintains no relationship with the subordinate command before a recall is initiated, there is little reason to believe that the higher or the subordinate command maintain any degree of trust in the other, except the forced reality that all parties are involved in the same operation and generally need to move the ball down the field together in order to score a touchdown.

Lieutenant Colonel Isabel Geiger, former 833d Transportation Battalion commander (the Army battalion which maintains Title 10 responsibilities over the RPOEs) stated that in her experience, “the DDOC was not well versed and potentially not prepared to manage JTF-PO operations.”¹⁰¹ Not only was the DDOC not well versed nor prepared to manage JTF-PO, they maintained no disciplined initiative to assist requests or field questions, but rather shifted ownership of operations to the J3T (training) directorate, which is charged with JTF-PO program management (specifically training

¹⁰⁰ COL(R) Gregory Fontenot and COL(R) Kevin C. M. Benson, “The Conundrum of Mission Command,” *Army Magazine* 63, no. 6 (June 2013): 35, accessed 26 November 2014, http://www.ansa.org/publications/armymagazine/archive/2013/06/Documents/Fontenot_June2013.pdf.

¹⁰¹ Geiger, interview.

and verification- not operational execution).¹⁰² Geiger was the JTF-PO SPOD commander for four USTRANSCOM JTF-PO exercises and validations to include JTF-PO support to Joint Logistics Over The Shore (JLOTS) '12 at Fort Story and a high visibility Joint Assessment Team (JAT) deployment exercise via C-130 to the Port of Anchorage in support of Alaskan Shield '14. In her experience the capability was simply not exercised as it should be. During her two years as a battalion commander assigned to JTF-PO, the DDOC was consistently unaware of the JTF-PO exercises and generally unresponsive to requests for support and information.¹⁰³

Gunn made a similar observation. “The DDOC BWC [battle watch captain] was generally aware of the JTF-PO mission, but was not engaged at more than a surface level of understanding . . . and were not informed to the point where they could provide any direction or guidance.”¹⁰⁴

No data was discovered during research that suggests the other two command constructs (OPCON to GCC/JTF or service component retention) would produce any vastly dissimilar results in regards to the mission command principle of “exercise disciplined initiative” than the current OPCON to USTRANSCOM relationship. The very nature of JTF-PO demands disciplined initiative by members of the team, as a non-standing JTF maintained at high readiness rates and on a rapid recall timeline demand both discipline and initiative by the individuals that comprise the team. The mission requires it. Arguably operations centers monitoring JTF-PO operations (or the conduct of

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Gunn, interview.

any DoD operations for that matter) should also maintain a high level of disciplined initiative; however, monitoring operations via web-based interface or telephone from an environmentally controlled facility, requires a different genre of disciplined initiative, but requires it nonetheless. An operations cell at SDDC, AMC, the GCC, or the supported JTF may prove as lacking in disciplined initiative as the USTRANSCOM DDOC, but that is merely speculation.

The fourth principle of mission command, “exercise disciplined initiative” is not solely intended for the subordinate; the commander’s staff must be held to this standard as well if mission command is to be successful.

Use Mission Orders

Despite the current operational relationship’s general tendency of abstaining from the first four principles of mission command, the current OPCON relationship substantiates the fifth principle of mission command, “use mission orders.” Of all personnel interviewed, no significant concerns were voiced regarding the use of mission orders in USTRANSCOM’s current OPCON relationship with JTF-PO.

Army Doctrine Reference Publication 6-0 describes the use of mission orders: “Commanders use mission orders to assign tasks, allocate resources, and issue broad guidance. Mission orders are directives that emphasize to subordinates the results to be attained, not how they are to achieve them.”¹⁰⁵ USTRANSCOM’s Standing Execution Order (EXORD) 14-002 and both Instruction 10-27 Vol I and Vol II provide unclassified, standing mission type orders to potential JTF-PO commanders. Additionally the products

¹⁰⁵ Department of the Army, ADRP 6-0, 2-4.

are available as educational tools to assist the JTF-PO community, as well as the entire DoD, to understand the capabilities and utilization of the under-advertised global asset.

Per the Standing EXORD, upon activation or recall in support of a training or validation exercise, USTRANSCOM publishes a fragmentary order and warning order with applicable detail pertinent to the current scenario or area of operations in order to augment the Standing EXORD and 10-27 Vol I and Vol II.¹⁰⁶ USTRANSCOM's publication of the Standing EXORD and both volumes of 10-27 prove invaluable as guidance products to the JTF-PO layperson and provide an initial operational framework as well as starting point from which to begin planning at the JTF-PO level. With appropriate updates in the form of warning orders or fragmentary orders produced for missions as they arise, this construct is both useful in relation to guidance provided from TCCC to the JTF-PO commander but also conforms to a valuable principle of mission command philosophy.

The alternative command structures (operational control to the GCC/JTF or service component retention) would almost certainly provide no more valuable utilization of mission orders than the current OPCON to USTRANSCOM construct. A shift in command structure may provide comparative results with regards to successful use of mission orders, but the proof of the successful use of mission orders was apparent as documented during semi-structured interviews: not one subject provided negative feedback on USTRANSCOM's use of mission orders. One interviewed subject attributed the efficient use of the Standing Execution Order and Instruction 10-27 Vol I and Vol II to general CCMD proficiency in the orders process, the result of continuous, laborious

¹⁰⁶ USTRANSCOM, Standing Execution Order 14-002, 3.A.

hours drafting and updating “O-Plans on the shelf” and the repetitive preparation of contingency plans for their assigned AORs.¹⁰⁷

The fact that interviews yielded no significant issues regarding the use of mission orders on the part of interviewees must not be understated. This directly contributed to the expeditious summary length of the fifth principle of mission command, as USTRANSCOM’s OPCON of JTF-PO construct appeared to regularly and effectively employ the use of mission orders. There was no evidence that either of the alternative OPCON relationships to either the GCC/JTF or service component would result in a more effective use of mission orders.

Accept Prudent Risk

The sixth and final metric tested against the current command relationship is the mission command principle “accepting prudent risk.” ADRP 6-0 addresses prudent risk as “a deliberate exposure to potential injury or loss when the commander judges the outcome in terms of mission accomplishment as worth the cost. Opportunities come with risks. . . . Commanders avoid inadequate planning and preparation. Successful commanders use risk assessment and risk management to help determine what level of risk exists and how to mitigate it.”¹⁰⁸

Critics of the current OPCON relationship routinely frame this risk against the joint principle of simplicity. Their observation is that the current construct forces a reporting chain adjustment during the critical period of the N-hour sequence (effectively

¹⁰⁷ Velasquez, interview.

¹⁰⁸ Department of the Army, ADRP 6-0, 2-5.

the timeline “count down” from notification of a mission to actual departure from home station). This essentially changes the command structure during that critical time-sensitive period (12 hours for APOD; 36 hours for SPOD) during which JTF-PO units are notified of a pending deployment, recalling the troops, receiving intel updates, finalizing personnel and equipment, coordinating with service partners, and loading gray tail aircraft to depart for theater. The argument against the current construct “accepting prudent risk” is that an adjustment to the reporting chain during this high tempo period is not actually prudent risk but has escalated above acceptable levels and presents increased liability. Army COL A, who maintains a background in Global Response Force (GRF) and Special Operations, emphasizes that GRF N-hour sequences are stressful enough to execute without changing mission command relationships mid-stream to report to a staff officer unfamiliar with JTF-PO operations and construct: “Why make a change in extremis?”¹⁰⁹ he asks. A correlation exists between accepting prudent risk and the joint principle of simplicity. Simply stated, the more complex the operation the riskier it is likely to become. Overly complicating any aspect of an operation directly increases risk. Joint Publication 3-0 describes the importance of simplicity in the conduct of Joint Operations:

The purpose of simplicity is to increase the probability that plans and operations will be executed as intended by preparing clear, uncomplicated plans. . . . Simplicity contributes to successful operations. Simple plans and clear, concise orders minimize misunderstanding and confusion. When other factors are equal, the simplest plan is preferable.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Army COL A, interview.

¹¹⁰ Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: CJCS, August 2011), A-3.

Major Joseph Borovicka, former 688th RPOE commander, approached risk from a different point of view: “I suspect that the command relationship was just weird enough to not get hired [by the GCC].”¹¹¹ He expounded on this tendency for risk aversion, explaining a past specific example when JTF-PO received a USTRANSCOM warning order for possible operational deployment. The warnord initiated immediate deployment of a small slice of Air Force CRG in support of a likely APOD mission, but the RPOE was never activated. Thus in the absence of an Army unit, the deployment was categorized as a CRG deployment rather than a JTF-PO deployment. This meant that the CRG continued their traditional, assigned chain of command reporting procedures up through AMC rather than shift operational control to USTRANSCOM, as a JTF-PO deployment would warrant. The relationship is undoubtedly simpler; moreover, based on numerous discussions Borovicka had with seniors in USTRANSCOM, AMC and SDDC, as well as personnel outside the JTF-PO realm, he surmised that the command relationship was “too confusing to put in the toolbox” for future use.¹¹² This suggests that either GCCs, JFCs, and JTFs were so averse to the risk involved in requesting a capability that they would not operationally control, or that was the relationship was so confusing or so frustrating as to preclude the request for the full JTF-PO. Several critics suggest exactly that: altering the reporting chain results in risk above a prudent level and the reporting chain in and of itself is too complicated to deal with in the first place.

The counterargument provided by several interview subjects was that this change in the command relationship was in fact a perfectly acceptable level of risk; furthermore,

¹¹¹ Borovicka, interview.

¹¹² Ibid.

not only was the risk prudent but the shift in operational control from the service components to USTRANSCOM is imperative for proper employment of JTF-PO. When questioned about complications or confusion resulting from a shift in operational control upon employment of the JTF-PO, Col Johnson, the 571st CRG commander and JTF-PO Liberia commander during Operation United Assistance, stated, “most definitely, it creates challenges . . . we had to do a lot of explaining to JFC and theater staff regarding OPCON and support relationships.”¹¹³ Despite challenges in clarifying JTF-PO’s place in a task organization diagram, Colonel Johnson stood firm that USTRANSCOM’s operational control makes the most sense when weighed against the alternatives. Though operational control shifts to USTRANSCOM upon the formation and deployment of JTF-PO, it is not until this point that the JTF-PO actually becomes unified under one umbrella.¹¹⁴ The argument suggests that this ultimate unity of effort justifies any perceived risk of altering command relationships during the N-hour sequence.

When asked to describe confusion or risk associated with shifting operational control to USTRANSCOM upon activation of the JTF-PO, Major Keith Pruett, replied, “it turned the relationship [with his assigned battalion and brigade] from a ‘yes sir’ to an ‘fyi sir.’” They went from controlling and dictating to assisting,” in accordance with their Title 10 duties as a force provider to JTF-PO.¹¹⁵ He explained that internally there was no confusion regarding the altered OPCON relationship, as everyone in the community was

¹¹³ Johnson, interview.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Pruett, interview.

well versed in the JTF-PO construct and the implications of activation.¹¹⁶ RPOEs maintained good communication, especially when on alert status, with CRG and EPU counterparts, and USTRANSCOM chaired monthly JTF-PO synchronization meetings with representatives from all JTF-PO force providers in attendance telephonically. Pruett stated that the confusion with JTF-PO was specific to organizations outside the JTF-PO community, those “external agencies to which we were obligated to report.”¹¹⁷

An almost identical observation was made by Major (Ret.) Velasquez, the 690th RPOE commander during Operation Unified Response in Haiti in 2010. He observed that, “there was minimal confusion for those personnel within JTF-PO units . . . the confusion lay with the supported agencies. Those outside agencies were just not clear why USTRANSCOM would not relinquish OPCON to the supported agencies.”¹¹⁸

Half of interviewed subjects suggested there were no significant concerns or perceived violations of the sixth principle of mission command; accept prudent risk resulting from a shift in operational control upon activation. From their experience the source of risk did not lay within the reporting hierarchy of the JTF-PO but in the grasping of the concept by outside agencies, specifically those organizations that JTF-PO was designed to support. In other words the risk was actually a significant educational and doctrinal issue.

Of the two alternative command constructs (OPCON to GCC/JTF or service component retention), the first would almost certainly result in the current division of

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Velasquez, interview.

opinions on the significance of the risk associated with an alteration to the operational control of the JTF-PO during the N-hour sequence vice the risk associated with supported agency lack of knowledge of JTF-PO capability and rules governing their employment. If GCC/JTF and other supported agencies are currently unclear on the JTF-PO construct and rules for the use of JTF-PO, there is no reason to suspect any further clarity merely from a change in operational control. ADRP 6-0's address of "prudent risk" specifically reminds commanders to "avoid inadequate planning and preparation;"¹¹⁹ not fully understanding the implications and use of a requested capability or asset subjects supported commanders to that very pitfall.

The third command construct, service component retention, alleviates any possible risk associated with a shift in operational control during the N-hour sequence as there is no altering of the chain of command in this construct. Additionally, service component retention alleviates any risk associated with the higher command not understanding the capability and intricacies governing the use of JTF-PO. However, service component retention presents a new risk: sacrificing the jointness of the task force. As Col Johnson addressed early, when the RPOE and CRG or EPU combine to form JTF-PO, it is under USTRANSCOM that "they are unified under one umbrella" and become a joint organization reporting to a joint organization. Service component retention suggests placing operational control of the SPOD mission with SDDC and the APOD mission with AMC. This stovepipes the process through green or blue channels. Velasquez echoes Johnson's observation: "when assigned to the service component

¹¹⁹ Department of the Army, ADRP 6-0, 2-5.

command, the jointness is lost and priorities may be skewed or not fully understood in the big picture.”¹²⁰

In addition to effectively losing the joint aspect of JTF-PO with service component retention, this construct also presents an additional new risk identified during semi-structured interviews: the ability of SDDC or AMC to effectively provide operational control of a tactical MTOE unit supporting a GCC/JTF afar. Nearly half of interview subjects expressed concern with the service components, whose core competencies are management and oversight of strategic transportation and distribution, to effectively provide mission command to the JTF-PO while deployed.

Summary

There is no consensus that under the principles of mission command that the JTF-PO's OPCON relationship with USTRANSCOM is the appropriate relationship for the JTF. Additionally, there is no consensus that the two proposed alternative relationships (JTF-PO under OPCON to the supported GCC/JTF and service component operational control) are potentially more appropriate than the current OPCON relationship.

However, there is a consensus that the program requires significant improvements in areas such as force education, reporting chain of command and procedures, and general support by higher headquarters. The education of the force on the capability, utility, and rules governing the use of the concept clearly requires re-visitation. When the GCC/JTF does not completely understand a capability requested or simply does not request a capability due to a lack of understanding, gaps in processes are not addressed. If

¹²⁰ Velasquez, interview.

the current USTRANSCOM OPCON relationship continues its legacy, JTF-PO reporting to the USTRANSCOM J3 through the DDOC must also be readdressed. Army COL A put it quite simply: “Just because they [USTRANSCOM] can, doesn’t mean they should [exercise operational control over the JTF-PO].”¹²¹

In the end, all organizations involved must cooperate with one another in order to effectively and rapidly provide support when called upon.

¹²¹ Army COL A, interview.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Problems cannot be solved at the same level of awareness that created them.¹²²

— Albert Einstein,
“Finding Quotations Was Never This Easy!”

Eternal vigilance is required to assess and ruthlessly eliminate programs and processes that have outlived their usefulness.¹²³

— Brigadier General David A. Fastabend and Mr. Robert H. Simpson,
“Adapt or Die: The Imperative for a Culture of
Innovation in the United States Army”

This study set out to answer the following primary research question: Is JTF-PO’s OPCON relationship with USTRANSCOM the appropriate task organization under the principles of Mission Command? Furthermore, it sought to identify the implications and potential alternatives of placing the JTF-PO under OPCON of the GCC or supported JTF, as well as the implications and potential alternatives of maintaining service component operational control (SDDC for SPOD, AMC for APOD).

This chapter addresses the findings identified from the semi-structured interviews, attempts to make meaning of the results, and provides recommendations for action, as well as recommendations for further study.

¹²² Think Exist.Com, “Finding Quotations Was Never This Easy!” accessed 13 November 2014, http://thinkexist.com/quotation/problems_cannot_be_solved_by_the_same_level_of/222020.html.

¹²³ David A. Fastabend and Robert H.Simpson, “Adapt or Die: The Imperative for a Culture of Innovation in the United States Army” (Research Paper, US Air War College, 25 March 2010), accessed 19 November 2014, http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/army/%20culture_of_innovation.pdf.

Throughout this study, it was clear that the Army, Air Force, and Navy officers interviewed agreed that there were issues with USTRANSCOM's OPCON relationship of JTF-PO. To varying degrees, each subject interviewed expressed concerns associated with USTRANSCOM maintaining operational control. However, there was no unanimity regarding whether or not the OPCON relationship was the appropriate task organization under the principles of Mission Command. The interviewed population was equally divided over their opinions as to the appropriateness of the current OPCON relationship under the principles of Mission Command. Critics of the current command construct argued that USTRANSCOM's operational control of JTF-PO violated the principles of mission command and is therefore not the appropriate command relationship. Advocates for the current construct did not uniformly agree that the OPCON relationship could be inappropriate by failing to meet all of the principles of Mission Command; as several suggested that the principles of mission command may not be applicable above the tactical or operational level. George Muth observed in *Foreign Policy*, "It is one of the core concepts of *Auftragstaktik* that the commanding officer is on the frontlines and fights and dies with his men. . . . *Auftragstaktik* is a tactical and at most an operational concept, it has no advantage on the strategic level."¹²⁴ Additionally, several interviewees (both pro and counter the current OPCON relationship) observed that the Secretary of Defense mandated the JTF-PO capability and that the concept was in line with the Unified Command Plan in spite of any perceived violations of mission command philosophy.

¹²⁴ Muth.

With regards to the OPCON relationship and the principles of mission command, critics of the current construct argued that USTRANSCOM's operational control of JTF-PO violates several of the principles of mission command, including build cohesive teams through mutual trust; create a shared understanding; provide a clear commander's intent; exercise disciplined initiative; and accept prudent risk. All personnel interviewed, (whether generally opposed to the current construct or generally in favor of the current construct), stated that the current relationship violated mission command philosophy by one principle or another. But not all personnel interviewed believed that the OPCON relationship was inappropriate due to violations of mission command philosophy. This juxtaposition suggested that interviewees may not have weighed the appropriateness of a particular command structure against its satisfying the six principles of mission command.

There were however, three complete consensuses regarding violations of the principles of mission command: trust in the DDOC (build cohesive teams through mutual trust) and mutual understanding of the JTF-PO capability and rules for the use of the capability (accept prudent risk and create shared understanding). All interview subjects mentioned these concerns in some manner, regardless of whether the interviewee was opposed to the current operational construct or in favor of the current construct. All personnel interviewed agreed that they were concerned with the DDOC's ability to provide support to and communicate with JTF-PO, an example inconsistent with the principle of mutual trust. As suggested throughout this study, trust is the theme throughout mission command doctrine and academic articles, as well as the absolute sole requirement of the six principles to ensure effective mission command. Issues with trust

in the DDOC's ability to support affects not only the trust principle of mission command, but negatively affects all other principles of mission command as well.

The second and third consensus regarding violations of the principles of mission command were directed towards the principles, accept prudent risk and create shared understanding. All personnel interviewed expressed a concern with education of both the service branches as well as the GCC staffs on the capability and employment of JTF-PO. The recurring theme across interviews was that better education of the force is required in order to spread understanding of the capabilities of and reporting structure of the JTF-PO. The consensus remained that there is currently no shared understanding of JTF-PO at neither the macro nor micro levels, thus representing a hurdle to accepting prudent risk with regards to employment of the capability. Interviewees were unanimous in suggesting that USTRANSCOM do more to educate the force on the JTF-PO. Without a shared understanding of the capability across the force, mission command of JTF-PO will not be effective, resulting in ineffective employment of the capability and continued issues with the command construct, no matter which organization (USTRANSCOM, the GCC or JTF, or the service component) retains operational control. Major Pruett, former 690th RPOE Commander and a veteran J3 and XO of several JTF-PO exercises CONUS and OCONUS, suggests, "JTF-PO managers must continue to educate the GCCs, as they need to know; proponents must clearly explain exactly what robust capability is at their fingertips, and also how to employ it and improve upon it."¹²⁵ This recurring theme of education of the force on JTF-PO capabilities and the rules governing the request of the capability run consistent throughout all interviews conducted in support of this research.

¹²⁵ Pruett, interview.

Army, Air Force and Navy officers well-versed in JTF-PO operations agree that USTRANSCOM, SDDC, AMC and MSC must increase efforts at educating the force on this niche capability. Otherwise, there is the potential risk of not employing the asset appropriately, of underutilizing the capability, and the chance that DoD might reallocate funding and essentially nullifying the capability to deactivation.

The theme across the interviews regarding weighing the importance of the principles of mission command against USTRANSCOM's OPCON relationship of JTF-PO is that trust is clearly the *primer inter pares* or first among equals in comparison to the other five principles of mission command. Without mutual trust, building cohesive teams, a key aspect in the non-standing joint task force, is unlikely. Behind trust, interviewees suggested the following priority of importance of mission command principles within the current OPCON construct: create shared understanding, accepting prudent risk, exercise disciplined initiative, provide clear commander's intent, and use of mission orders.

With the military's transition from large scale combat operations, the relevance of the JTF-PO and the strategic implications of the command relationship between this JTF and higher is vital to the success of future rapid response operations. Outside of special purpose forces, there is arguably no other rapidly deployable company-sized element with as much potential strategic impact on the front end of a major operation as the JTF-PO. This potential for strategic implication is the nexus of the importance of managing this capability wisely. In an effort to assist the JTF-PO community with remedying shortfalls identified through this study, the following recommendations are provided. The following five recommendations align with at least one of five of the six principles of

mission command. No recommendation was identified for the principle entitled use mission orders, as interviewees were in consensus regarding the appropriate, effective use of mission orders under the current operational construct.

Recommendations

This study recommends that the Department of Defense, U.S. Armed Services, and U.S. Transportation Command implement as quickly as possible the following ideas:

Recommendation 1

Educate the USTRANSCOM DDOC by implementing a JTF-PO training requirement for rotating battle watch personnel assigned to and-or monitoring the DDOC. In an effort to address the mission command principles of (1) build cohesive teams through mutual trust, (2) create shared understanding, and (3) exercise disciplined initiative, battle watch personnel should be educated on the capabilities they are charged with monitoring. An education program implemented by TCJ3 will facilitate continuity and empower DDOC personnel to provide effective direction and guidance during JTF-PO exercises and operational deployments. The resulting continuity will lead to increased initiative, higher understanding, and greater trust between JTF-PO and USTRANSCOM staff.

Recommendation 2

Develop an all-encompassing, rather than compartmentalized, JTF-PO awareness plan to foster a shared understanding. With regards to the mission command principles of (1) create shared understanding and (2) provide a clear commander's intent, the plan must incorporate the supported agencies, and be supported by Combatant Commanders. The

products, Standing Execution Order, USTRANSCOM Letters of Instruction 10-27 Vol I and Vol II, and the JTF-PO 101 brief, currently exist and are available as educational tools to assist the JTF-PO community; however, command emphasis is required to appropriately educate the force on significant scale. The onus must be placed not on TCJ3T, whose job is ensuring a trained and ready JTF-PO, not education of the force. The awareness plan must evolve as the capability evolves and as further discussion on RPOE realignment under Forces Command (FORSCOM) matures.

Recommendation 3

Integrate JTF-PO exercises and validation results into TCCC update briefs. Through the mission command principles of (1) provide a clear commander's intent and (2) create shared understanding, providing JTF-PO exercise updates will posture the USTRANSCOM staff to better address TCCC expectations while simultaneously providing better support during JTF-PO operational deployments. As noted in the recent JTF-PO Senegal Operation United Assistance after action review, gaps in information sharing at USTRANSCOM were identified as concerns by JTF-PO leaders.¹²⁶ Furthermore, the JTF-PO Liberia after action review for the same operation identified a "perceived lack of confidence at USTC . . . despite the bi-annual validation requirement that should have a baseline level of confidence."¹²⁷ Integration of JTF-PO exercises and

¹²⁶ Col David Mounkes, Commander 123rd Contingency Response Group, After Action Report, OUA (Operation United Assistance), JTF-PO Senegal, 28 November 2014, Word document provided via email.

¹²⁷ Col Bradford Johnson, Commander, 571st Contingency Response Group, After Action Report, OUA (Operation United Assistance), JTF-PO Liberia, 18 December 2014, Word document provided to author via email.

validation results into TCCC update briefs emphasizes command interest, with the added benefit of educating the update brief audience on the capability.

Recommendation 4

TCJ3T should focus less on assessing JTF-PO readiness and more on integrating JTF-PO into more Tier-1 training exercises. With respect to the mission command principles of (1) accept prudent risk and (2) create shared understanding, TCJ3T should allow the service component commanders to assess the readiness of their own units.¹²⁸ With readiness assessment delegated down to the component levels, J3T increases time available to pursue and analyze those large scale training opportunities appropriate to showcase the capability. Furthermore, with JTF-PO integrated into additional large scale exercises, more GCC senior personnel have the opportunity to observe the capability in person. Accept the risk of empowering subordinate commanders to assess unit readiness. Instead focus on training the capability, which has the added benefit of displaying the capability and providing awareness to the force.

Recommendation 5

Align the Navy Expeditionary Port Units to the RPOE/CRG alert cycle to solidify habitual relationships. This specifically addresses the mission command principle of building cohesive teams through mutual trust. There is currently no rotating “alert” EPU identified for rapid recall and deployment in support of JTF-PO. Without an actual Navy element in an alert status, the EPUs are forced to seek volunteers from throughout the

¹²⁸ COL A, interview.

EPUs. This results in delayed reaction time and ad hoc organizations, neither of which is conducive to mission command philosophy.¹²⁹

Final Thoughts

Although this thesis has studied the USTRANSCOM's OPCON relationship of JTF-PO as viewed through the principles of mission command, further study on the topic should be conducted. As the research has indicated, there are numerous opinions on the subject and no overwhelming consensus as to the way ahead. Furthermore, this study brought out other areas that should be researched such as, not only the JTF-PO OPCON relationship with USTRANSCOM, but in command relationships between all subordinate non-standing JTFs and their higher headquarters.

Further research is also highly recommended on the integration of mission command philosophy throughout Joint, as well as sister service doctrine. Currently, mission command is mentioned only briefly in JP 3-0 Joint Operations, but there is no mention at all in JP 4-0 Joint Logistics. The concept of mission command should be mutually emphasized throughout the services in order to be effective. There is no equivalent to the Army Doctrine Reference Publication 6-0 Mission Command in Air Force or Navy doctrine. A philosophy specific to one component cannot thrive in a joint environment if there is no mutual understanding of the concept.

Additionally further research is highly recommended on the utility of the principles of mission command at the strategic and operational levels of war, as well as the utility of mission command in "heterarchical, complex, adaptive, and interdependent

¹²⁹ Gunn, interview.

networks”¹³⁰ such as the global distribution network. Jorge Muth’s assertion that mission command is “a tactical and at most an operational concept”¹³¹ favors the suggestion that the JTF-PO is a tactical level extension of a strategic functional command, with one foot in both the far right and far left of the three levels of warfare. As Dr. Paparone and George Topic observed in their series of mission command articles, atypical organizations require unique ways of being led; these interconnected systems may warrant niche chains of command based on the mission, capability of the unit, and support nature of the relationship.¹³² There may be no utility to forcing non-standing JTFs, where the subordinate units do not maintain habitual relationships with their activated higher HQ, into conforming to the principles of mission command. These principles may benefit commanders and subordinates with habitual relationships, more “typical” task organized units at the tactical and possibly operational level, but they may be irrelevant and possibly damaging to force upon atypical organizations like JTF-PO. These topics were beyond the scope of this paper but definitely merit further study.

¹³⁰ Paparone and Topic, “Mission Command and Logistics Interdependencies.”

¹³¹ Muth.

¹³² Paparone and Topic, “Mission Command: The Starfish and the Spider.”

GLOSSARY

ADCON (Administrative Control). The direction or exercise of authority over subordinate or other organizations with respect to administration and support, including organization of Service forces, control of resources and equipment, personnel management, logistics, individual and unit training, readiness, mobilization, demobilization, discipline, and other matters not included in the operational missions of the subordinate or other organizations. ADCON is synonymous with administration and support responsibilities identified in Title 10, USC. This is the authority necessary to fulfill Military Department statutory responsibilities for administration and support. ADCON may be delegated to and exercised by commanders of Service forces assigned to a CCDR at any echelon at or below the level of Service component command. ADCON is subject to the command authority of CCDRs. ADCON may be delegated to and exercised by commanders of Service commands assigned within Service authorities. Service commanders exercising ADCON will not usurp the authorities assigned by a CCDR having COCOM over commanders of assigned Service forces (JP 1, V-12).

CCMD (Combatant Command). A unified or specified command with a broad continuing mission under a single commander established and so designated by the President, through the Secretary of Defense and with the advice and assistance of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JP 1, 43). There are nine total Combatant Commands, including six Geographic Combatant Commands and three Functional Combatant Commands. The Geographic Combatant Commands include US Africa Command (USAFRICOM), US Central Command (USCENTCOM), US European Command (USEUCOM), US Northern Command (USNORTHCOM), US Pacific Command (USPACOM), and US Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM). The three Functional Combatant Commands include US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), US Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM), and US Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM).

COCOM (Combatant Command, Command Authority). Nontransferable command authority, which cannot be delegated, of a combatant commander to perform those functions of command over assigned forces involving organizing and employing commands and forces; assigning tasks; designating objectives; giving authoritative direction over all aspects of military operations, joint training, and logistics necessary to accomplish the missions assigned to the command (JP 1, GL-5).

Command and Control. The exercise of authority and direction by a properly designated commander over assigned and attached forces in the accomplishment of the mission. Also called C2 (JP 1-0, GL-5).

DDOC (Deployment Distribution Operations Center). The JDDOC is a joint capability solution designed to satisfy the requirement to integrate strategic and theater deployment and distribution operations within each CDR's Area of Responsibility. The JDDOC, acting under the control, direction, and auspices of the CDR, directs, coordinates and synchronizes deployment, redeployment, and distribution operations and enhances the combatant commander's ability to execute logistics plans with National Partners and assigned forces. The JDDOC supports the CDR's operational objectives by synchronizing and optimizing strategic and multi-modal resources to maximize distribution, force deployment, and sustainment. Its ultimate goal is to maximize CDR combat effectiveness through improved end-to-end (E2E) distribution and Total Asset Visibility (USTRANSCOM Instruction 10-27, 15).

GCC (Geographic Combatant Command). See Combatant Command (CCMD) above.

JCIDS (Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System). The collaborative effort that uses joint concepts and integrated architectures to identify prioritized capability gaps and integrated doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, and facilities (DOTMLPF) solutions (materiel and non-materiel) to resolve those gaps (CJCSI 6212.01F).¹³³

Mission Command. The conduct of military operations through decentralized execution based upon mission-type orders. It empowers individuals to exercise judgment in how they carry out their assigned tasks and it exploits the human element in joint operations, emphasizing trust, force of will, initiative, judgment, and creativity. Successful mission command demands that subordinate leaders at all echelons exercise disciplined initiative and act aggressively and independently to accomplish the mission. They focus their orders on the purpose of the operation rather than on the details of how to perform assigned tasks. They delegate decisions to subordinates wherever possible, which minimizes detailed control and empowers subordinates' initiative to make decisions based on understanding what the commander wants rather than on constant communications. Essential to mission command is the thorough understanding of the *commander's intent* at every level of command and a command climate of mutual trust and understanding (JP 1-0, V-15). Mission command is the preferred method of exercising C2 (JP 1-0, I-18).

N-Hour (Notification hour). Designated by the CDR USTRANSCOM (through VOCO or published order) and starts the deployment sequence. APOD is 12 hours; SPOD is 36 hours for the Terminal Battalion Headquarters and RPOE, 96 hours for the EPU (USTRANSCOM Instruction 10-27 Vol II, 75).

¹³³ Defense Acquisition University, "Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System (JCIDS)," accessed 14 April 2015, <https://dap.dau.mil/acquipedia/Pages/ArticleDetails.aspx?aid=12227505-ba29-41c0-88f0-682a219d5bbc>.

OPCON (Operational Control). The authority to perform those functions of command over subordinate forces involving organizing and employing commands and forces, assigning tasks, designating objectives, and giving authoritative direction necessary to accomplish the mission. It should be delegated to and exercised by the commanders of subordinate organizations; normally, this authority is exercised through subordinate JFCs, Service, and-or functional component commanders. OPCON provides authority to organize and employ commands and forces as the commander considers necessary to accomplish assigned missions. It does not include authoritative direction for logistics or matters of administration, discipline, internal organization, or unit training. These elements of COCOM must be specifically delegated by the CCCR (JP 1, V-6).

Supported Commander. 1. The commander having primary responsibility for all aspects of a task assigned by the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan or other joint operation planning authority. 2. In the context of joint operation planning, the commander who prepares operation plans or operation orders in response to requirements of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. 3. In the context of a support command relationship, the commander who receives assistance from another commander's force or capabilities, and who is responsible for ensuring that the supporting commander understands the assistance required (JP 3-0, GL-16-17).

Supporting Commander. 1. A commander who provides augmentation forces or other support to a supported commander or who develops a supporting plan. 2. In the context of a support command relationship, the commander who aids, protects, complements, or sustains another commander's force, and who is responsible for providing the assistance required by the supported commander (JP 3-0, GL-17).

TACON (Tactical Control). The authority over assigned or attached forces or commands, or military capability or forces made available for tasking, that is limited to the detailed direction and control of movements and maneuvers within the operational area necessary to accomplish assigned missions or tasks assigned by the commander exercising OPCON or TACON of the attached force. TACON is able to be delegated from a lesser authority than OPCON and may be delegated to and exercised by commanders at any echelon at or below the level of CCMD. TACON does not provide organizational authority or authoritative direction for administrative and logistic support. TACON does not provide organizational authority or authoritative direction for administrative and logistic support (JP 1, V-7-8).

UCP (Unified Command Plan). UCP is a classified document published by the CJCS, approved by the President, and addressed to GCCs that assigns primary tasks, defines authority of the commanders, establishes command relationships, and gives guidance on the exercise of combatant commands.

APPENDIX A

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1) Describe your experience with Joint Task Force-Port Opening.
- 2) What is your experience with the C2 construct (task organization) between JTF-PO and USTRANSCOM? How would you describe the relationship between the individual JTF-PO units in garrison vice the “activated” JTF-PO relationship to USTRANSCOM?
- 3) Describe the issues or confusion that the JTF-PO command and support relationships created for you and other leaders.
- 4) In your experience with the current OPCON relationship between JTF-PO and USTRANSCOM has the JTF-PO Commander reported directly to the USTRANSCOM Commander or did the JTF-PO Commander report to the USTRANSCOM DDOC or J3 Cell? If the JTF-PO Commander reported to the DDOC or J3 Cell, how well informed / situationally aware of the JTF-PO mission were the personnel manning the DDOC or J3 Cell?
- 5) In your experience with the current OPCON relationship between JTF-PO and USTRANSCOM has the JTF-PO Commander continued to provide operational and administrative data/reports to their parent organization (SDDC for JTF-PO SPOD, AMC for JTF-PO APOD)?
- 6) In your experience with the current OPCON relationship between JTF-PO and USTRANSCOM has USTRANSCOM provided priorities (of supply/sustainment being discharged/offloaded/distributed)? If not, who did (SDDC, AMC, supported GCC/JTF, host nation, USAID)?
- 7) Describe the appropriate command relationship for the JTF-PO with potential higher headquarters such as USTRANSCOM, the GCC, or SDDC/AMC.
- 8) In your opinion, is the JTF-PO OPCON relationship to USTRANSCOM significantly different from that of conventional modular sustainment units during deployment?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEWED PERSONNEL

Army COL A. Telephone interview by author, 31 March 2015. COL A has over two years' experience in the JTF-PO community. He also maintains a background in joint operations and has deployed in support of numerous named combat operations.

Borovicka, Joseph, Army Major. Telephone interview by author, 8 April 2015. MAJ Borovicka—Former Commander 688th Rapid Port Opening Element; Deputy Commander and J3 for numerous JTF-PO exercises and verifications, to include African Lion '13 in Agadir, Morocco in spring 2013; over two years of JTF-PO experience.

Drayton, Travis, Army Major. Interpersonal interview by author, 07 May 2015. MAJ Drayton—Former 24th Transportation Battalion Training Officer; assisted in the training, manning, equipping, and readiness of 688th Rapid Port Opening Element during initial stages; one year of JTF-PO experience.

Geiger, Isabel, Army Lieutenant Colonel. Telephone interview by author, 16 April 2015. LTC Geiger—Former Battalion Commander 833d Transportation Battalion; JTF-PO Commander for four USTRANSCOM exercises and verifications, to include the first no-notice JAT deployment exercise via C-130 to Port of Anchorage, AK in support of Alaskan Shield '14; over two years of JTF-PO experience.

Gunn, Eric, Navy Captain. Telephone interview by author, 24 April 2015. CAPT Gunn—Former Commander Expeditionary Port Unit 107; Deputy Commander JTF-PO SPOD in support of African Lion '13 in Agadir, Morocco in spring 2013; Commander JTF-PO SPOD in support of Turbo Distribution 14-08 at Port Arthur, TX in late 2014; over three years of JTF-PO experience.

Johnson, Bradford, Air Force Colonel. Telephone interview by author, 14 April 2015. COL Johnson—Commander 571st Contingency Response Group; Commander JTF-PO Liberia in support of Operation United Assistance Ebola efforts in West Africa in late 2014; over four years of JTF-PO experience.

Pruett, Keith, Army Major. Telephone interview by author, 16 April 2015. MAJ Pruett—Former Commander 690th Rapid Port Opening Element; former Executive Officer of 833d Transportation Battalion; JTF-PO XO and J3 in support of numerous USTRANSCOM exercises both CONUS and OCONUS; nearly three years of JTF-PO experience.

Velazquez, Armando, Army Major (Retired). Telephone interview by author, 15 April 2015. MAJ (R) Velazquez—Former Commander 690th Rapid Port Opening Element; JTF-PO J3 in Haiti in support of Operation Unified Response in 2010; nearly three years of JTF-PO experience.

APPENDIX C

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

This is a research project conducted by a student of the Command & General Staff College through the Military Master of Art & Science program. All participation is voluntary and may be curtailed or stopped at any time without warning or penalty. The Combined Arms Center Leadership Development and Education is supporting the research.

Purpose of the Research Study

The purpose of this research project is to examine in depth the current organizational command construct of the Joint Task Force-Port Opening in relation to the principles of Mission Command philosophy and identify and examine likely implications of a change in command structure.

Procedures

1. The expected number of participants in this research project is 10 interviewees.
2. The expected duration of the subject's participation is 30 minutes.
3. The procedures of this research will follow a semi-structured interview format.
4. Sequential steps of this procedure are: a) I will contact identified persons with experience in JTF-PO command construct; b) I will request to interview the potential interviewee; c) once potential interviewee agrees to be interviewed via written informed consent, I will schedule a date/time group to conduct the interview by phone; interviews will be recorded; d) if you do not agree to an interview, the process ends for you; e) once interviews are complete, I will compile data for analysis; f) I will provide you with the option to review your answers to the questions prior to my analysis to ensure you are comfortable with your responses g) if there are any follow-on questions, I will contact you again; otherwise, your portion of the process has ended.
5. In order to preserve confidentiality of interview participants, there are no alternative procedures to conduct interviews other than via oral means.
6. This project will not ask participants to discuss classified (for unclassified studies) information or potential violations of the UCMJ or criminal law.

Risks

There is no inherent risk in participating in this research study.

Benefits

This is a research study and there is no expectation that you will receive any direct benefit from participation.

Compensation

Participants will not be compensated for their participation.

Confidentiality

1. Confidentiality of records identifying the subject will be maintained for not less than three years by the primary researcher in the event that the researcher's records are inspected by the Human Subjects Protection Office or a DoD designee.
2. In order to maintain confidentiality for participants, the primary researcher will have sole access to participant information. Storage of participant data (recordings of interviews and interview documentation) will be maintained on one controlled media platform, safeguarded by password. Consent forms will be maintained separately from research interviews; no information will be shared with outside sources.
3. All data obtained about you, as an individual, will be considered privileged and held in confidence; you will not be identified in any presentation of the results unless you wish so. Participants who do not wish to be identified in this study will be assigned a pseudonym (e.g. Army Colonel A) associated with their data. Complete confidentiality cannot be promised to subjects, particularly to subjects who are military personnel, because information bearing on your health might be required to be reported to appropriate officials.
4. All data related to this study will remain secured for a period of not less than three years from the approval date for the research study.

Contacts for Additional Assistance

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you can contact the Principal Investigator: MAJ Philip 'Todd' Turner, 502-377-8415 or philip.t.turner.mil@mail.mil or the CAC LD&E Human Protections Administrator Dr. Maria Clark at maria.l.clark.civ@mail.mil.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this research study is voluntary. Anyone who is asked to be in a research study may say no. No one has to become a research subject. If you start a research study, you may stop at any time. You do not need to give a reason. No one can discriminate against you or treat you differently if you choose not to be in a research study or later decide to stop your participation.

Statement of Consent

I have read this form and its contents were explained. I agree to be in this research study for the purposes listed above. All of my questions were answered to my satisfaction. I understand I will receive a signed and dated copy of this form for my records.

_____/____/____
Signature of Research Subject Date

Printed Name of Research Subject

_____/____/____
Principal Investigator Signature Date

Approval for Full Disclosure of Identity

Participants are entitled to determine for themselves whether they participate and the extent of their participation to include full disclosure of their identity. Some participants want to have their personal voices heard. For participants who approve of full disclosure of their identity in this research, please sign and date below. For participants who do not consent to full disclosure of their identity (and prefer a pseudonym assigned to their data), please do not sign and date below.

I approve of the researcher using my name and duty title in this research.

_____/____/____
Signature of Research Subject Date

Printed Name of Research Subject

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